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THE NEW YORKER

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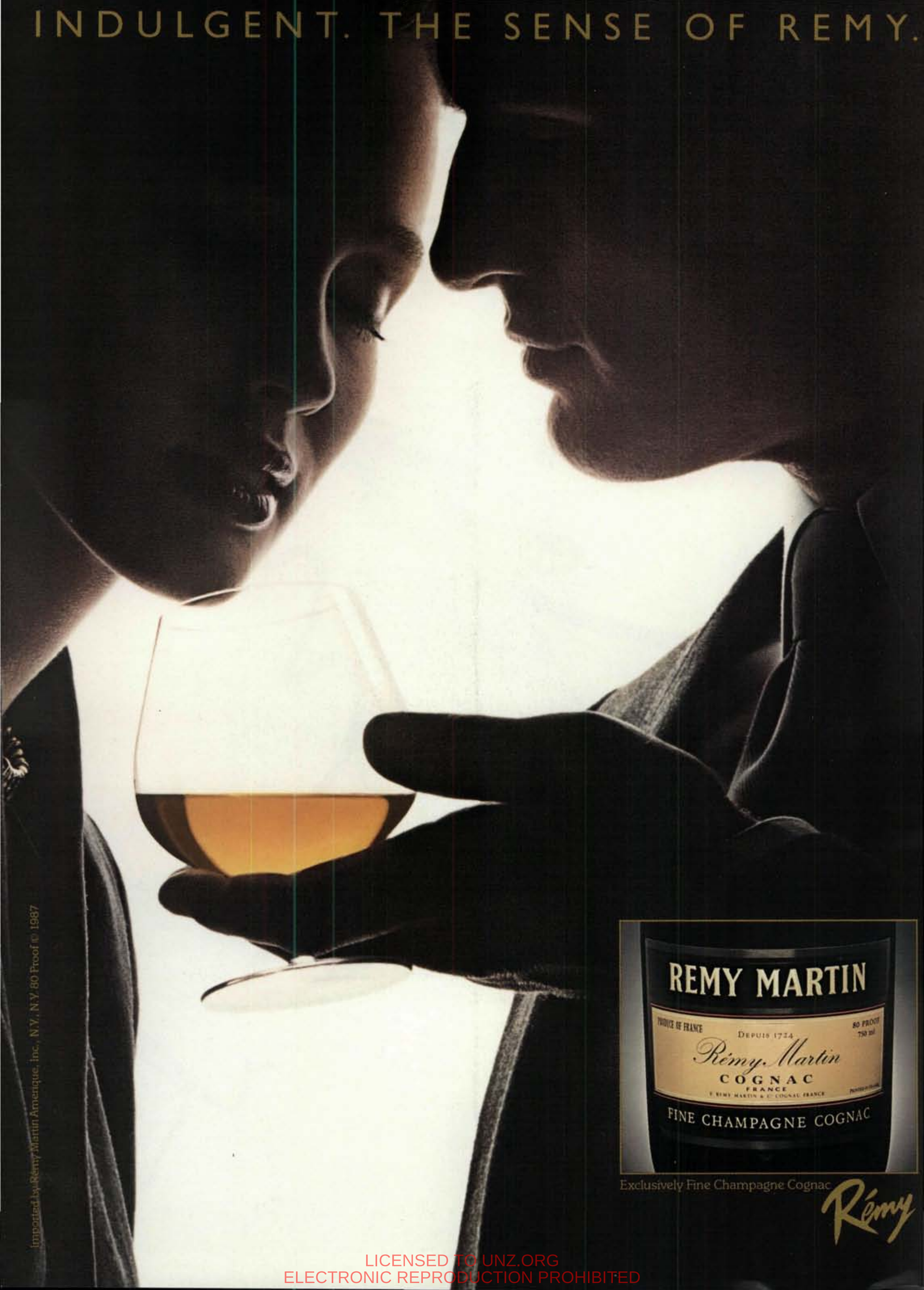
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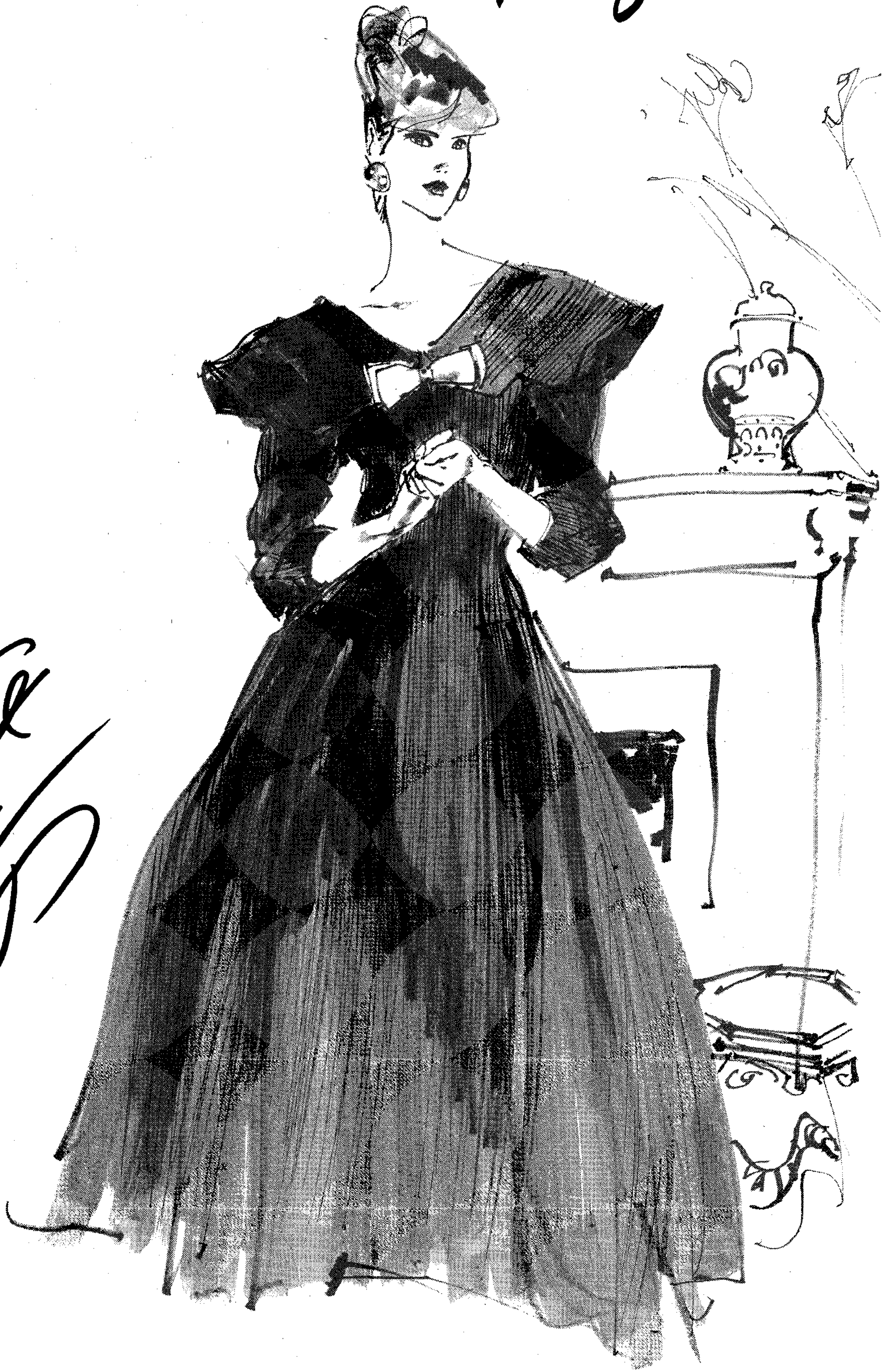

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

PLAYS AND MUSICALS

Ain't Misbehavin'—A revival, after ten years, of this celebration of the music and the comic spirit of Fats Waller, in all its beauty and variety, as conceived and directed by Richard Maltby, Jr. The members of the original company are present and just as dynamic as they were the first time around. They are Nell Carter, Andre De Shields, Armelia McQueen, Ken Page, and Charlaine Woodard. The invaluable (and protean) Luther Henderson, conductor and arranger, again presides at the piano. Miss Carter, Miss McQueen, Mr. Page, and Miss Woodard leave the cast after Dec. 18; Terri White, Patti Austin, Ken Prymus, and Jackie Lowe will take their places. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/5/88.) (Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 3.)

Almost Perfect—A comedy by Jerry Mayer, directed by Geraldine Fitzgerald. With Ethan Phillips, Mia Dillon, and Cathy Lee Crosby. (Hudson Guild Theatre, 441 W. 26th St. 760-9810. Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

Checkmates—Ron Milner's "domestic comedy," about an older couple who lease the apartment above them to a recently married young couple, should be more entertaining than it is. There are some funny moments, though, and the performances are distinguished. The actors are Ruby Dee and Paul Winfield (downstairs) and Denzel Washington and Marsha Jackson (upstairs). Woodie King, Jr., directed. (46th Street Theatre, 226 W. 46th St. 246-0102. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

The Cocktail Hour—A dramatist returns to his native city in upstate New York to break the news to his prosperous family that he has written a play about them and to ask their permission to have it produced. More easily said than done. A. R. Gurney's humor has never been more sparkling, his characters never more convincing or engaging. The play is as sensitive as it is funny, and the actors do it full justice, under Jack O'Brien's direction. Nancy Marchand gives a marvellous performance as the hero's mother, and Holland Taylor, Bruce Davison, and Keene Curtis are fine, too. (11/7/88) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

Coriolanus—Irene Worth is magnificent as Volumnia in this highly stylized but simple-minded version of Shakespeare's last tragedy. Steven Berkoff has directed Christopher Walken so as to turn the title character into a heavy-handed comment on Rambo-loving America, but the production is seductive, mostly because the acting is so good almost across the board. (12/12/88) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

The Devil's Disciple—A tame production of Shaw's dashing melodrama. (11/28/88) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Emerald City—A comedy by the Australian writer David Williamson. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 279-4200. Tuesday through Saturday at 8. Matinée Sunday at 3. Closes Dec. 18.)

Equity Library Theatre—A revival of **peg o' my heart**, the 1912 comedy by J. Hartley Manners, is the third in this season's series of eight productions. (103rd Street and Riverside Dr. Nightly, except Monday, at 8. Matinées Saturday and Sunday at 2:30. For information about tickets, for which contributions are requested, call 663-2028. Closes Dec. 18.)

Forbidden Broadway 1988—A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. The performers are Toni DiBuono, Roxie Lucas, David B. McDonald, and Michael McGrath—inspired mimics all. (9/26/88) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8:30; Saturdays at 7:30 and 10:30; and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Sundays at 3:30. Special performances Monday, Dec. 19, at 8, and Wednesday, Dec. 21, at 2:30.)

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Godspell—A revival of the 1971 musical by Stephen Schwartz and John-Michael Tebelak. (Lambs, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3. Closes Dec. 31.)

The Heidi Chronicles—A new play by Wendy Wasserstein, with Joan Allen, Peter Friedman, and Boyd Gaines. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

The Hired Man—A musical import from London that is based on Melvyn Bragg's novel of the same name. The score and lyrics are by Howard Goodall and the book is by Mr. Bragg. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 279-4200. Monday and Wednesday through Saturday at 8. Matinées Saturday at 2 and Sunday at 3. Closes Dec. 18.)

Italian American Reconciliation—The latest offbeat comedy about love and loneliness in Little Italy from John Patrick Shanley, the author of "Moonstruck." The play, which marks Shanley's directorial début, is not as wise or as psychologically complex as some of his earlier plays have been—or as charmingly ingenious as its set, designed by Santo Loquasto—but it is full of eloquent laughs and provides the occasion for a masterly performance by John Turturro as the girl-shy young man who tries to do good by seducing his best friend's fierce ex-wife. (11/14/88) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 246-8989. Nightly, except Monday, at 7:30. Matinées Saturday and Sunday at 3. Closes Dec. 18.)

Lambs Theatre Company—The fifth annual presentation of **the gifts of the magi**, a musical adapted from two short stories by O. Henry. Randy Courts composed the music and lyrics, and Mark St. Germain provided the book and additional lyrics. (Little Theatre at the Lambs, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7. Matinées Wednesdays at 2, Saturdays at 1, and Sundays at 3. Closes Dec. 31.)

Light Opera of Manhattan—Presenting Victor Herbert's **babes in toyland**. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000. Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays at 2, Saturdays at 3:30, and Sundays at noon and 4:30.)

The Majestic Kid—A new play by Mark Medoff. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 307-7171. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

The Middle of Nowhere—A musical revue of Randy Newman songs conceived and directed by Tracy Friedman. (Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Our Town—Spalding Gray as the Stage Manager in the Thornton Wilder play. Gregory Mosher is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays, and Monday, Dec. 19, at 8, and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

Phaedra Britannica—A play by Tony Harrison, based on Racine's "Phèdre." With Caroline Lagerfelt and Bob Gunton. Previews Dec. 12-13. Opens Dec. 14 at 7. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Tuesdays through Saturdays, and Monday, Dec. 12, at 8. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 2.)

The Promise—A play by José Rivera. (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 549 W. 52nd St. 247-3405. Tuesday through Saturday at 8. Matinées Saturday and Sunday at 3. Closes Dec. 18.)

Reckless—This new play by Craig Lucas, about a woman whose husband has taken a contract out on her life, has slightly absurdist tendencies and pretensions but nothing to say. Only the sprightly performances, from a cast led by Robin Bartlett, keep it from being unwatchable. (10/10/88) (Circle Repertory Company, 99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Saturdays at 2 and Sundays at 3. Special performances Monday, Dec. 19, at 8, and Wednesday, Dec. 21, at 2. Closes Jan. 1.)

The Rimers of Eldritch—Lanford Wilson's 1966 play about the dark underside of small-town America, said to have been written in answer to "Our Town." In truth, Wilson's play, a hodgepodge of Southern-gothic clichés, is far more sentimental than Wilder's. There is some good acting in this revival—most notably from Georgine Hall, Suzy Hunt, and Kaiulani Lee—but Mark Brokaw's direction plays into the melodrama's excesses instead of trying to offset them. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103. Tuesday through Saturday at 8. Matinées Saturday at 2 and Sunday at 3. Closes Dec. 18.)

Romance/Romance—A pair of charming one-act musicals, with Alison Fraser and Barry Williams in the leading roles. Barry Harman wrote the clever books and lyrics, and Keith Herrmann wrote the engaging scores. Mr. Harman directed. (5/16/88) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450. Mondays through Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Rosmersholm—John Shea and Suzanne Bertish in Ibsen's 1866 play. (La Mama Annex, 66 E. 4th St. 475-7710. Wednesdays through Sundays at 7:30. Closes Dec. 23.)

Rumors—This farce about a party to celebrate a couple's tenth anniversary (the host and hostess are mysteriously absent) may well be the funniest play that Neil Simon has ever written. It is acted to perfection by Christine Baranski, André Gregory, Mark Nelson, Ron Leibman, Ken Howard, Lisa Banes, Joyce Van Patten, Charles Brown, and Cynthia Darlow, under the impeccable direction of Gene Saks. (11/28/88) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.)

Speed-the-Plow—David Mamet's satire on Hollywood is just as scathing, just as acute as his "Glengarry Glen Ross," and even funnier, if that can be imagined. With David Rasche, Bob Balaban, and Felicity Huffman; directed by Gregory Mosher. (5/16/88) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6277. Tuesdays through Saturdays, and Monday, Dec. 19, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Sweethearts—Antoinette Mille and Walter Adkins in a musical tribute to Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Wednesdays at 2:30 and Sundays at 3.)

The Taffetas—Four talented young women, im-

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE–Cont'd

personating a group of singing sisters, perform hits from the fifties. The show, conceived by Rick Lewis as a live broadcast from the early days of television, represents yet another trip down memory lane. Still, for what it is, it's very well done. With Jody Abrahams, Karen Curlee, Melanie Mitchell, and Tia Speros. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

THE THREE SISTERS—The Chekhov play, in a translation by Randall Jarrell. Presented by the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660. Tuesday through Saturday at 8. Matinée Saturday at 2. Closes Dec. 17.)

LONG RUNS—**ANYTHING GOES:** This exuberant revival is primarily a tribute to Cole Porter himself. The company, which includes Bill McCutcheon, Howard McGillin, and Linda Hart (substituting for Patti LuPone, who returns to the cast on Dec. 28), does more than justice to the words and score. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays, and Monday, Dec. 19, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **CATS:** A musical version of T. S. Eliot's "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats." Score by Andrew Lloyd Webber, choreography by Gillian Lynne, and direction (and some lyrics) by Trevor Nunn. A superb spectacle, which may run for many more years and give cats the right to vote and hold office. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **A CHORUS LINE:** A group of young dancers audition for a handful of chorus jobs in a show not yet in rehearsal, and by the time the evening is over we know everything about all of them. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Mondays through Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **DRIVING MISS DAISY:** Frances Sternhagen and Earle Hyman star in Alfred Uhry's play, which tells of the growing attachment of a cranky old woman in Atlanta to her black chauffeur. Directed by Ron Lagomarsino. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038. Tuesdays through Saturdays, and Monday, Dec. 19, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** This longest of long runs turned twenty-eight last May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Sundays at 3.) . . . **42ND STREET:** Pleasantly old-fashioned choreography by the late Gower Champion and a few classic songs enliven an otherwise inert pastiche of the Warner Brothers movie that made Ruby Keeler a star. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 398-0280. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:15. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:15, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE:** Bonnie Franklin and Tony Musante in Terrence McNally's enchanting comedy about sex and the sudden onset of love in an apartment on Tenth Avenue. (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8, and Saturdays at 7 and 10. Matinées Wednesdays at 2:30 and Sundays at 3.) . . . **INTO THE WOODS:** This musical by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine is an attempt to show what lurks beneath the surface of conventional fairy tales. The songs are beautiful or funny—sometimes both. Directed by Mr. Lapine. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-6363. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **JACKIE MASON'S "THE WORLD ACCORDING TO ME!":** The comedian's one-man show. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099. Thursdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Sundays at 3. Closes Dec. 31.) . . . ***M. BUTTERFLY:*** David Henry Hwang's funny, mysterious, and often beautiful play, with David Dukes and B. D. Wong. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 246-0220. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **ME AND MY GIRL:** A silly chestnut of a British musical dating back to the thirties. With Jim Dale. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 246-0102. Tuesdays through

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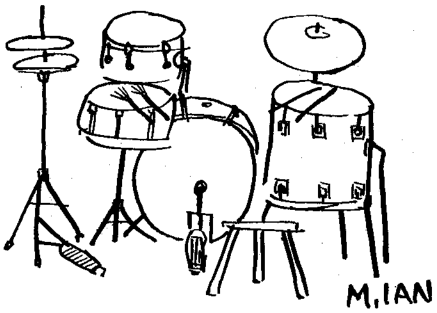
Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Tim Shew and Norman Large star in the musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel, but the real standouts of the production are the settings, by John Napier, and the lighting, by David Hersey. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Saturdays at 2.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **OIL CITY SYMPHONY:** Mike Craver, Mark Hardwick, Michelle Horman, and Mary Murfitt, gifted and sophisticated singers and instrumentalists, appear as a quartet of dedicated hicks reuniting at their small-town high school in this very funny musical. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.) . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** The much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets (by Maria Björnson), everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **SARAFINA!:** This South African musical, an explosion of talent, was conceived, written, and directed by Mbongeni Ngema, who also, with Hugh Masekela, composed and arranged the score. The acting, dancing, and singing, to a local form of popular music called Mbaqanga, are a wonder. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays, and Monday, Dec. 19, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **A SHAYNA MAIDEL:** A well-wrought and deeply moving play by Barbara Lebow about a Polish-Jewish family torn apart by the events of the Hitler era. The production is beautifully directed by Mary B. Robinson. Bring lots of Kleenex to this one, but expect to leave uplifted. (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **STARLIGHT EXPRESS:** A bore on roller skates. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** This first play by Robert Harling is set in a beauty shop in a small town in Louisiana, and consists mainly of the often amusing, wisecracking chatter of the proprietress, her assistant, and four steady customers. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 6 and 10; and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

MISCELLANY

NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL—Final performances of the fiesta will include the American début of **D V 8 PHYSICAL THEATRE,** *a London dance company.* Dec. 13 at 7, Dec. 14-17 at 8, and Dec. 18 at 3. . . . ¶ The **DAVID GORDON/PICK UP COMPANY** in "United States," a new full-length work. Dec. 14 at 7, and Dec. 15-17 at 8. . . . ¶ Downtown-jazz keyboardist **WAYNE HORVITZ** with his nine-piece big band and with a smaller ensemble called the President. Bobby Previte percusses in both groups. Dec. 16-17 at 8. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100.)



1000 AIRPLANES ON THE ROOF—A music-theatre piece by Philip Glass (score), David Henry Hwang (text), and Jerome Sirlin (sets). Patrick O'Connell is the sole actor present, and he talks about and acts out his abduction by aliens on a set decorated by projected slides. The music is performed by the Philip Glass Ensemble. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Dec. 14-17 at 8, Dec. 18 at 3 and 8, and Dec. 19-20 at 8.)

SONG OF LAWINO—A theatre-dance-music work based on a poem of the same name by the Ugandan poet Okot p'Bitek. Adapted by Valeria Vasilevski and Jawole Willa Jo Zollar. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Dec. 15-19 and Dec. 21 at 8. Through Dec. 27.)

HOTEL MARTINIQUE and **UNDER THE RIVER**—Two music-theatre productions. The former, by Kevin Malony, was inspired by Jonathan Kozol's article about the homeless; the latter, by Jim Provenzano, is set in a New Jersey PATH station. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. Dec. 15-17 at 8, and Dec. 18 at 3 and 8. For information about tickets, call 691-6500.)

BIG APPLE CIRCUS—A one-ring tent circus. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. Through Jan. 2. For information about show times and tickets, call 874-6770.)

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL—Performances of the "Christmas Spectacular," with the Rockettes, of course. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. Through Jan. 4. For information about show times and tickets, call 757-3100.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—Performances of "The Nutcracker" are being presented through Dec. 31. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Dec. 13-15 at 6; Dec. 16 at 8; Dec. 17 at 2 and 8; Dec. 18 at 1 and 5; and Dec. 19-21 at 6. The season continues through Feb. 26.)

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATRE—Dec. 13 at 8: "Blues Suite," "Cry," "Suite Otis," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 8: "Opus McShann," "Shards" (New York première), and "Caverna Magica." . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 8: "The Stack-Up," "Suite Otis," "Tell It Like It Is" (New York première), and "For Bird with Love." . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 8: "Concerto in F," "Survivors," and "Caverna Magica." . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 2: "Streams," "Tell It Like It Is," "Vespers," and "Concerto in F." . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 8: "Caverna Magica," "Shards," and "For Bird with Love." . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 3: "Opus McShann," "Masekela Langage," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 8: "Divining," "Cry," "Survivors," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 8: "Night Creature," "From the Mountains of Taübalu" (première), "Vespers," and "Caverna Magica." . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 8: "Blues Suite," "Love Songs," "Suite Otis," and "Revelations." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 246-8989. Through Jan. 1.)

PILOBOLUS—Opening performances of a four-week engagement. Dec. 13 at 7: "Carmina Burana, Side II," "Bonsai," "Pseudopodia," and "I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone" (New York *première*). . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 8: "Molly's Not Dead," "Return to Maria La Baja," and "Début C" (New York première). . . . ¶ Dec. 15-16 at 8, and Dec. 17 at 2: "Molly's Not Dead," "Return to Maria La Baja," and "Début C." . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 8, and Dec. 18 at 2: "Land's Edge," "Ciona," "Moon Blind," and "I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone." . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 7:30, and Dec. 20 at 8: "Molly's Not Dead," "Return to Maria La Baja," and "Début C." . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 8: "Land's Edge," "Ciona," "Moon Blind," and "I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Jan. 8.)

STEPHEN PETRONIO COMPANY—In "AnAmnesia" and "Simulacrum Reels." (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Dec. 15-18 at 8:30.)

BILL CRATTY DANCE THEATRE—Presenting two new works, "Aerolite" and "Recognition." (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 924-0077. Dec. 15-18 at 8:30.)

Déjà Vu Dance Theatre—In a program of new and repertory works. (Triplex, 199 Chambers St. 618-1980. Dec. 16-17 at 8, and Dec. 18 at 3.)

NIGHT LIFE

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which bold-face type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—In the lobby, people come and go talking of the Forty-fourth Street Marching and Chowder Club, which used to meet here, and of Lerner and Loewe, who knocked out "My Fair Lady" here, and of **MONTGOMERY, PLANT & STRITCH,** a one-man, two-woman vocal group from Texas who are singing in close harmony in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Shows at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen Tuesdays through Saturdays. Dining.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A big, soigné cabaret on the edge of Chelsea, in the heart of the fur and fashion-student districts. **BLOSSOM DEARIE** is temporarily absent, saving her wee voice for end-of-the-year revels; she comes back Dec. 22 at nine.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—The long-gone midtown pleasure dome (1949-65) after which this airy two-tiered operation is named had a midget m.c. named Pee Wee Marquette, caged finches, and Bird himself; the new room has waiters and waitresses in Reeboks and bow ties, a rainbow-colored Wurlitzer jukebox, neon wading birds, and jazz people of various modern schools. **MARK MORGANELLI,** a trumpeter as well as the room's music booker, holds forth with a quartet Dec. 16-17. Music from nine Sundays through Thursdays and from nine-thirty Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—On the back wall of this jazz club there's a neon version of the Manhattan skyline, with a crescent moon and two stars attendant upon it—one of the best examples of inert-gas folk art we know of. Nat (King) Cole, the soothingest of crooners and the fleetest of jazz pianists, is the subject of a tribute conceived by pianist-singer **MONTY ALEXANDER;** his combo includes trumpeter **HARRY (SWEETS) EDISON,** who recorded with Cole in the fifties. They open on Dec. 20. Music from nine. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Music for many kinds of people, including unreconstructed folkies, rock-and-roll fundamentalists, Village bopcats, and followers of ace R. & B. guitarist **CORNELL DUPREE.** Dupree's guitar-playing is a model of economy—cool and dry, full of open spaces—and it is the perfect foil for **RICHARD TEE'S** exuberant, gospelly piano and organ. Tee worked with Dupree in Stuff, a late-seventies R. & B. sextet made up of topnotch New York studio men, and he works with him in the Gadd Gang, which is run by ex-Stuff drummer Steve Gadd. Tee is also a member of Dupree's own band, **WHO IT IS,** which performs here on Dec. 15. The rest of the lineup: Dec. 12, rock singer Melissa Etheridge; Dec. 13, the Jeff Healey band; and Dec. 17, folksinger **TOM PAXTON** and the Carolling Carollers. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at eight and eleven, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A crowded, duskily lit neighborhood bar, where pianists, bassists, and (a new wrinkle) drummers compete for your ear with professional conversationalists. Truth and beauty usually prevail. **KENNY BARRON** will be at the piano, **RUFUS REID** on bass, and **BEN RILEY** on drums through Dec. 17. First set at nine-forty-five. Dining.

Carlos I, 432 Sixth Ave., at 10th St. (982-3260)—Pretty much everything about this jazz room is nice: the long rows of tables covered with pink linen, the bijou bandstand, the view from the bar of the bandstand, and the view out the window of Vaux & Withers' gabled Victorian courthouse. **AHMAD JAMAL** is here with his quartet nightly, except Mondays. Jamal is a pianist whose effusions are meant to be seen—even his silences are florid. He hops from one end of the piano bench to the other, leaving piles of notes in his wake; he turns sideways to the piano and plays something delicate; he leans back, crosses his feet, and shows you what a piece of cake concertizing is; he mops himself off with a towel and rises from the bench to admire the efforts of his sidemen. Music from nine-thirty.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—**BOBBY SHORT,** a prince among café singers, is in the little principality known as the Café Carlyle, singing Cole Porter and other gilt-edged material. **BEVERLY PEER** (bass) and **ROBBIE SCOTT** (drums) make it a trio. Sets at ten and midnight Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Cat Club, 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—This room, which caters to thrash-metal buffs and cooler heads on weeknights, opens its doors on Sundays to swing-music fans, most of whom come to Lindy. Feet jitter, skirts twirl, and smiles break out everywhere. The New York Swing Dance Society organizes these gatherings, and on Dec. 18 it brings in George Gee & His Make Believe Ballroom Orchestra, a seventeen-piece band from Pittsburgh, along with tap dancer Shorts Davis. Music from eight. . . . Back in the modern world, a Los Angeles rock band called Jane's Addiction grinds out hard-bitten stuff on Dec. 14.

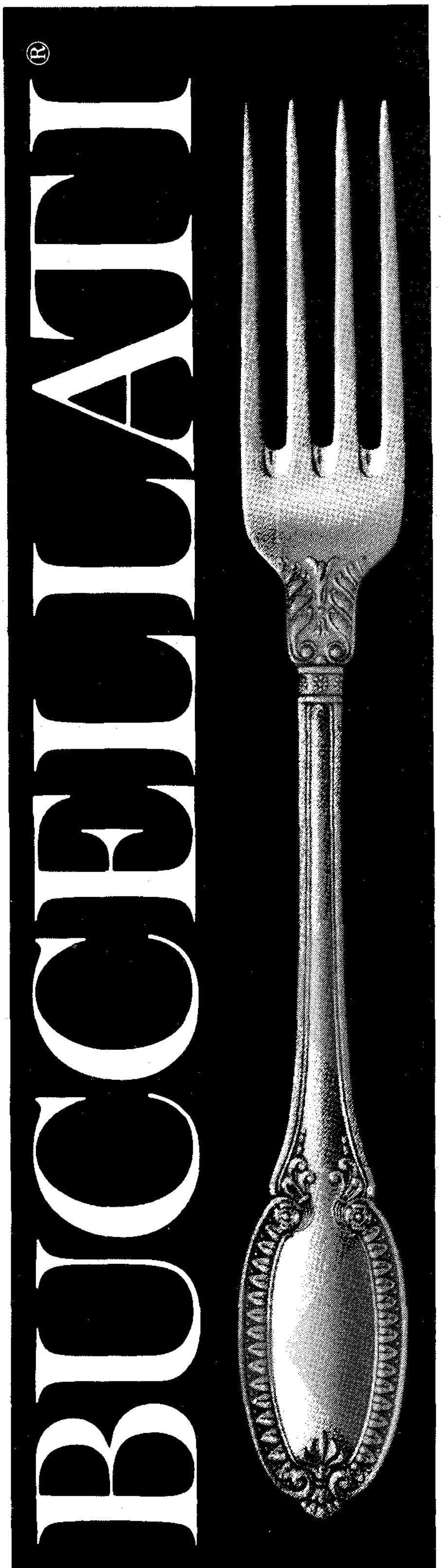
Eagle Tavern, 355 W. 14th St., at Ninth Ave. (924-0275)—An Irish bar in the meat-packing district, not too far from the boondocks. There's activity in the back room on Fridays (jug-band music, bluegrass, "newgrass") and Saturdays (traditional Celtic sounds). Banjo man Marty Cutler and his Charged Particles hold forth Dec. 16; Fintan Vallely, a County Armagh flutist, performs Dec. 17. Music from nine.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—Through a heavy-duty steel door, through a green Plexiglas door, down a long, narrow, fun-house passageway (mirrors in which you can watch yourself multiply; corrugated-metal siding you can riffle), and down a flight of stairs, you'll find this velvet-and-mirror-walled *boîte.* **SCOTT HAMILTON,** a thirty-four-year-old tenor saxophonist whose big, breathy sound has led some people to imagine that they are hearing Ben Webster or some other Swing Era ghost, is here with his quintet Dec. 13-18. With his neat sketch of a mustache and swept-back hair style and more-experienced-than-his-years face, Hamilton even looks the part. **TERENCE BLANCHARD** (trumpet) and **DONALD HARRISON** (alto saxophone), two under-thirty, conservatory-trained musicians from New Orleans whose work recalls fifties and sixties hard bop, co-direct a quintet starting Dec. 20. Music from eight. Dining.

Fortune Garden Pavilion, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—Two things not known to be available in the next world—Chinese food and American jazz—can be found here, under a greenhouse roof giving onto a patch of midtown sky. The piano, a Steinway that sits grandly in the middle of the room, will be in the fully guaranteed hands of **TOMMY FLANAGAN** for six nights starting Dec. 13. Bassist **GEORGE MRAZ** will be at his side. **KENNY BARRON** brings his trio up from the Village on Dec. 19. First set at nine-thirty Mondays through Fridays, at eight on Saturdays, and at seven on Sundays.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Turn-of-the-century New York Sunday *Herald* posters and Hirschfeld caricatures on the walls, and, next to the brass-railed partition between the bar and the dining room, a modern Steinway. **ROGER KELLAWAY,** a pianist for whom two hands aren't always enough (he sometimes uses an elbow to splatter the keyboard and punctuate one of his flying tours around it), works with bassist **JAY LEONHART** Dec. 13-17. **PHOEBE LÉGÈRE,** whose assorted talents (she plays piano and accordion, has a voice of impressive size, and does campy variations on a red-hot-mama theme) have made her a favorite in both downtown and uptown spas, will be on view Dec. 18-19. Music from nine-thirty.

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—A second-floor retreat (attained by passing through a recently annexed downstairs restaurant) that features avant-garde jazz, advanced and unadvanced rock, and miscellaneous weird sounds. It has a slapped-together, homemade look, and, judging by the S.R.O. crowds, it is a thriving enterprise. Freestyle British guitarist **DEREK BAILEY** is the ringleader in an improv fête that starts Dec. 14 and stops Dec. 17; **BILL FRISELL,** a guitarist whose heroes are Jim Hall and Jimi



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NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

Hendrix, brings in a group on Dec. 18. Music after nine.

Lone Star Café, 61 Fifth Ave., at 13th St. (242-1664)—Texas-like in significant respects, though not in the open-spaces-and-clear-sight-lines department, in which it is New York-like. The **CUCUMBERS,** a one-woman, three-man rock band from Hoboken, sing about their home town (gone to the gentrifiers) and domestic matters (lazy boyfriends, babies) on Dec. 12; the **JAMES HARMAN** band, a blues-and-boogie outfit that works the California bar circuit, will be here on Dec. 17, along with an Austin trio called the Tail Gators; **HUBERT SUMLIN,** a blues guitarist who served with Howlin' Wolf for two decades, performs on Dec. 19. Music after nine. Dining.

Lone Star Café Roadhouse, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—The midtown branch of the aforementioned honky-tonk. It has more space than the parent joint; it also has more mirrors, more fireplaces (two, on the second floor), more carpeting, more Gibson electric guitars serving as wall ornaments, and at least as many souvenir T-shirts and ball caps. **LOUP GAROU,** a New York-based Cajun band, performs Dec. 13, along with New Orleans soul singer **LIL QUEENIE; TREAT HER RIGHT,** a Boston quartet that plays chilly blues and rockabilly, holds forth on Dec. 14; **STANLEY JORDAN,** who sometimes treats his guitar as if it were a keyboard (tapping out a bass line with his left hand and a melody with his right), gives a solo recital on Dec. 17. Music after nine. Dining.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—Henry VIII and a unicorn on the walls, well-heeled cats on the banquettes, and six Benny Goodman admirers on the bandstand. Clarinettist **WALT LEVINSKY** is their leader; they give readings of the Goodman book at nine and eleven Tuesdays through Saturdays. Dining.

Mikell's, 760 Columbus Ave., at 97th St. (864-8832)—A spiffy uptown bar and restaurant, with signed photographs of some swinging non-musicians on the walls (Reggie Jackson smiling shyly, Dave Winfield tuning up in the cage) and some heavy hitters on the bandstand. **MICHEL CAMILO,** a Dominican-born jazz pianist who likes demon-fast tempos and the loud pedal, leads a combo Dec. 16-17. Music from about ten until two. Dining.

Ritz, 119 E. 11th St. (254-2800)—Up-to-the-minute rock in a half-century-old ballroom. It's a place for people who don't mind taking their rock standing up; the few seats that exist—in the balcony—are reserved for the usual suspects. The **GIPSY KINGS,** a gypsy guitar ensemble from Arles that plays explosive rock-tinged flamenco, perform on Dec. 14. **STEVE EARLE,** a Southern boy (he was born in Virginia, raised in Texas, and has spent the last thirteen or fourteen years knocking around Nashville) whose songs fall near the rock end of the country spectrum, will be here on Dec. 15, with his band, the **DUKES.** The characters who populate Earle's songs pump gas for a living or try pot farming and can't pay for their pickups and leave their women a lot but remember to call their children when they're out on the road. Earle, who looks scruffy enough to pass for a hood, takes his characters' parts, and sings with righteous indignation about their troubles. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at nine, and Fridays and Saturdays at eleven.

Speakeasy, 107 Macdougal St. (598-9670)—Outside, on the boulevards of Greenwich Village, heedless local youths and tourists from New Jersey make mad music; inside, dulcimers are hammered, fiddles are fiddled, folk songs are sung, and Professor Irwin Corey sometimes pops his head in to explain what a light bulb is (a thing that sucks up darkness until it goes out). **DAVE VAN RONK,** a Brooklyn-born blues shouter who has been roaming this neighborhood for thirty years, has the floor on Dec. 17. Music from about eight-thirty.

Spo-Dee-O-Dee, 565 W. 23rd St., at Eleventh Ave. (206-1990)—A curious mixture of swank and down-home. (The name comes from the 1949 Stick McGhee song "Drinkin' Wine, Spo-dee-o-dee," which was Atlantic Records' first hit.) The food is barbecue, the music is mainly rhythm and blues, the chandeliers are big, and the sofas are swell. **BIG TWIST & THE MELLOW FELLOWS,** a Chicago R. & B. outfit fronted by a jumbo-sized singer with an affable baritone, hold forth Dec. 15-17. First show at eleven.

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18	19	20	21			

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club—but not so crowded, as Yogi Berra said of another night spot, that nobody comes here anymore. **ABDULLAH IBRAHIM,** the expatriate South African pianist and composer, will be here Dec. 13-18 with his seven-man band, **EKAYA,** ruminating on African themes. **ART BLAKEY,** the hard-bop kingpin famous for his press rolls and the youthful players that he molds into old pros, comes in with the latest edition of his **JAZZ MESSENGERS** on Dec. 19. Shows from ten. Dining.

Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—A thirty-year-old three-ring circus. The ringmaster, a bearded gentleman named Art D'Lugoff, sometimes employs a barker to steer traffic to his multiple entertainments. In the basement, on Mondays after nine, African and Caribbean bands play for dancing and listening. Back upstairs, in the Terrace Bar, where business and conversation are often at boom level, **RICHARD SUDHALTER** and **CAROL BRITTO** play cornet-piano duets Dec. 13-18. On Dec. 13, they trade sets with **HELLMAN'S ANGELS,** a string trio whose head angel, **DAPHNE HELLMAN,** plays the harp. Music from ten.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—One of the few places below the surface of New York that deserve landmark status. It's also one of the few places anywhere that have a notable (if that's the right word) light fixture—one that Charles Mingus K.O.'d while trying to reason with the proprietor, and that the proprietor, a preservationist as well as a businessman, decided to leave in Mingus-ized condition. **DAVID MURRAY,** the thirty-three-year-old tenor voice of the World Saxophone Quartet, is sometimes a bruising, in-your-face modernist and at other times an almost-gentle-toned ballad player; he's here with his own quartet Dec. 13-18. Saxophonist **DAVID (FATHEAD) NEWMAN** brings in a quintet on Dec. 20. Mondays are claimed by the **MEL LEWIS** big band. Music after ten.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Capellini finanziera, sepia-toned photos of old Firenze, and jazz. The last emanates from a passageway between a front-room bar and a back room reserved for trenchermen. Pianist **JANE JARVIS** and bassist **MAJOR HOLLEY** are on duty through Dec. 17; **RUBY BRAFF,** who likes to speak low on his old-model cornet, arrives with a trio on Dec. 19. Sundays belong to the long-running duo of guitarist **GENE BERTONCINI** and bassist **MICHAEL MOORE.** Music weeknights from eight and Sundays from seven.

JAZZ / ROCK / PERSONAL APPEARANCES / PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

Robert Palmer—Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 864-0372. Dec. 15 at 8.

Walter Thompson Trio—Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. Dec. 15 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.

"Highlights in Jazz"—Ray Barretto, Paquito d'Rivera, Michel Camilo, Steve Turre, and others. (Loeb Student Center Auditorium, New York University, Washington Sq. S. and LaGuardia Pl. 998-4949. Dec. 15 at 8.)

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Paul Winter Consort—In a Christmas program. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133. Dec. 15-16 at 8, and Dec. 17 at 2 and 8.)

Nana Vasconcelos—Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. Dec. 16 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.

Gilberto Gil—Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. Dec. 16 at 9. For information about tickets, call 757-3100.

Yomo Toro—Triplex, 199 Chambers St. 618-1980. Dec. 17 at 8.

George Winston—Avery Fisher Hall. 874-2424. Dec. 19 at 8.

Benefit Concerts—Kenny Burrell, Lionel Hampton, Clark Terry, Stanley Turrentine, and others. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Dec. 17 at 8.) . . . ¶ The Wynton Marsalis sextet, Kent Jordan, and others. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Dec. 19 at 8.)

ART

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Peter Agostini—Unpainted plaster sculptures by an artist who casts from bottles, balloons, and other found objects. Through Dec. 17. (Vanderwoude Tananbaum, 24 E. 81st St.)

Camille Bombois (1883-1970)—Circus figures, rural folk, and narrow streets, by a French primitive. Through Dec. 24. (Soufer, 1015 Madison Ave., at 78th St.)

Stuart Davis (1892-1964)—Eggbeaters and all, in more than fifty paintings that span the artist's career. Through Dec. 23. (Salander-O'Reilly, 22 E. 80th St. Open Mondays.)

Johan Laurentz Jensen (1800-56)—Paintings of lilacs, lilies, chickweed, and double hollyhocks by a Danish artist who held the title Royal Flower Painter. Through Jan. 7. (Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St.)

Jackson Pollock (1912-56)—Paintings and works on paper. Through Dec. 17. (McCoy, 19 E. 71st St.)

Leonard Stokes—Collages. Through Dec. 17. (Cordier & Ekstrom, 417 E. 75th St.)

Wayne Thiebaud—Recent paintings and works on paper. Through Dec. 22. (Stone, 48 E. 86th St.)

Selina Trieff—Recent works by an artist who incorporates her own features into paintings, whether of people or animals. Through Jan. 28. (Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St.)

Jamie Wyeth—Paintings from the past three years. Through Dec. 22. (Coe Kerr, 49 E. 82nd St. Open Mondays.)

Group Shows—At the **BABCOCK,** 20 E. 67th St.: American paintings from Hudson River School artists, from early modernists, from contemporary artists—Asher B. Durand, Stephanie Adam, Marsden Hartley, and Joel Corcos Levy, among others. Through Jan. 5. (Closes at 4 on Saturdays.) . . . **BERRY-HILL,** 11 E. 70th St.: A show of classics in the money-painting genre. The artists include William M. Harnett, John Frederick Peto, and Otis Kaye. Through Dec. 17. (Open Mondays.) . . . **COLNAGHI,** 21 E. 67th St.: "Gothic to Renaissance," a show of European paintings, including a small panel from Sassetta's Borgo San Sepolcro altarpiece of 1444. Other artists include Altdorfer, Bellini, Vanni, and Wertinger. Through Jan. 28. (Open Mondays; closes at 4 on Saturdays.) . . . **HUNTER COLLEGE GALLERY,** Lexington Ave. at 68th St.: The first exhibition in a series of four collectively titled "A Debate on Abstraction." This one, which includes paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Mel Bochner, Valerie Jaudon, and Charles Perry, considers the artists' reliance on mathematical systems in the conception and/or execution of their work. Through Dec. 22. (Opens at 1.)

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

David Armstrong—Serene, seasonal paintings—barns, inlets, rowboats—done near the artist's home, on the Maine coast. Through Jan. 5. (Hammer, 33 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Christian Boltanski—New works in a variety of mediums. Through Jan. 7. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays. A retrospective can be seen at The New Museum.)

Warren Brandt / David Hendricks—Recent still-life paintings and works on paper. / Drawings of landscapes and cityscapes. Through Dec. 28. (Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St.)

Alberto Burri—Thirteen primarily black paintings by a seventy-three-year-old member of the Italian avant-garde. Through Jan. 7. (Rayburn Foundation, 41 E. 57th St.)

Mel Chin—In a show entitled "Selected Weapons" this sculptor uses such materials as forged steel, olivewood, velvet, and bamboo to build crude axes and saws and a monumental hammer and sickle. Through Dec. 31. (Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St.)

Dan Christensen—Spray paintings of the color-field variety. Through Dec. 31. (Drake, 50 W. 57th St.)

Crash—New spray-painted canvases, many incorporating metal, plywood, and Masonite. Through Dec. 24. (Janis, 110 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

John Gill—New ceramic works—vases, teapots, and bowls. Through Dec. 22. (Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

William Glackens (1870-1938)—Drawings done as studies for paintings and as illustrations for such magazines as *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post.* Through Jan. 7. (Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Roni Horn / Nicola de Maria—"Asphere III," a twelve-inch copper sphere weighing in at three hundred pounds. / Recent paintings. Through Jan. 7. (Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St.)

William King—Figurative wood and ceramic sculptures from the past three decades or so. Through Dec. 28. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

Robert M. Kulicke—Oils and monotypes, plus jewelry designed by Mr. Kulicke and Bessie Jamieson. Through Dec. 23. (Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St.)

Malcolm Morley—New paintings, drawings, and prints. Through Jan. 14. (Pace, 32 E. 57th St.)

Jules Olitski—New paintings. Through Dec. 31. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Jules Pascin (1885-1930)—Prints, and a few drawings. Through Jan. 21. (Fitch-Febvrel, 5 E. 57th St.)

Man Ray (1890-1976)—Works in a variety of mediums spanning the years from 1913 to 1921, and tracing the Dada artist's modernist roots. Through Jan. 6. (Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Milton Resnick / Robert Mapplethorpe—Recent paintings. / New photographs. Through Dec. 31. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Larry Rivers—Recent relief paintings. Through Jan. 7. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Peter Saari—Trompe-l'oeil wall constructions in which the artist uses plaster and paint to re-create ancient Roman wall decorations, with felicitous cracks and faded colors. Through Dec. 21. (Schoelkopf, 50 W. 57th St.)

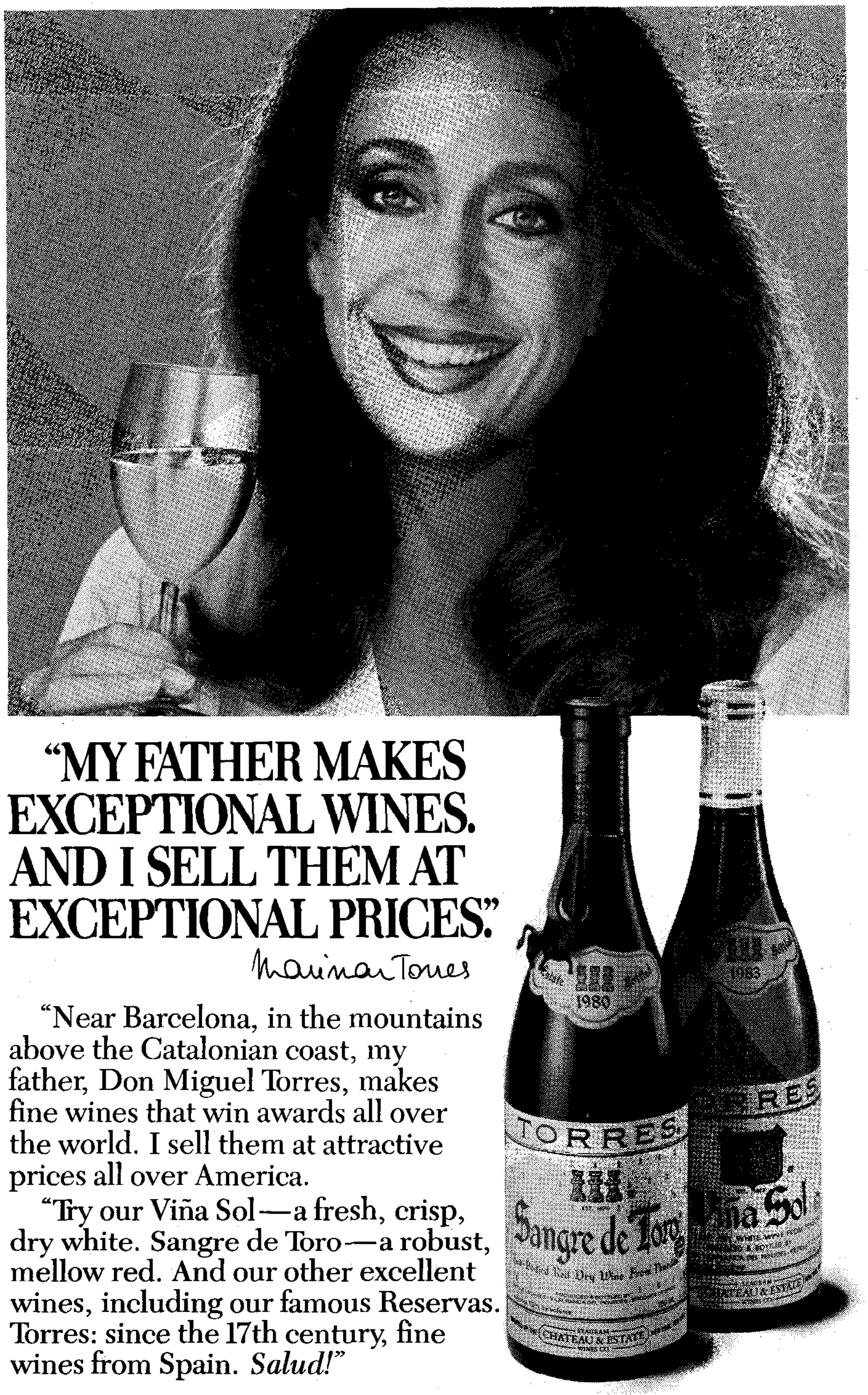
David True—Stain paintings on paper, in which man and nature meet. Through Jan. 7. (Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St.)

Group Shows—At the **KRUGIER,** 41 E. 57th St.: "The Presence of Ingres" as seen in seventy-five paintings and drawings by Balthus, Matisse, Degas, Picasso, and Chassériau, not to mention Ingres himself. Through Dec. 23. . . . **RUTH SIEGEL,** 24 W. 57th St.: Paintings and sculptures painted gold or gold-leafed. The works are by David Smith, Mary Obering, and Hunt Slonem, among others. Through Jan. 11. . . . **HOLLY SOLOMON,** 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.: Works in a variety of mediums (by Nancy Graves, William Wegman, Lucas Samaras, and others), which the gallery is presenting as examples of "American Baroque." Through Jan. 7. (Open Mondays.)

GALLERIES—SoHo

laine Anthony—Abstract paintings inspired by the artist's recent visit to the Southwest. Through Dec. 21. (Haller, 415 West Broadway.)

lice Aycock / Joe Breidel—Recent sculptures,



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ART—Cont'd

several of which incorporate mirrors. / New sculptures. Through Dec. 24. (Weber, 142 Greene St.)

Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-88)—A memorial exhibition of paintings. Through Jan. 14. (Nosei, 100 Prince St.)

Jerry Buchanan—Paintings from the past five years. Through Dec. 24. (Walls, 137 Greene St.)

Tom Butter—Sculptures in fibreglass. Through Dec. 30. (Marcus, 578 Broadway.)

Wendell Castle—A ten-year retrospective of his furniture. Through Dec. 23. (Milliken, 98 Prince St.)

Dale Chihuly—A group of blown-glass vases titled "The Venetian Pieces." Through Dec. 30. (Cowles, 420 West Broadway.)

Cora Cohen—Nonobjective paintings. Through Dec. 17. (Wolff, 560 Broadway.)

Jane Dickson—Drawings. Through Dec. 24. (Fawbush, 568 Broadway.)

Cornelia Foss—Recent paintings of still-lifes and nudes. Through Dec. 31. (Schreiber-Cutler, 171 Spring St.)

Phyllis Gaughran—Painted natsume-paper collages. Through Dec. 18. (Pindar, 127 Greene St. Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11:30 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Paul Georges—New paintings. Through Dec. 23. (Plumb, 81 Greene St.)

Leon Golub—Four new ten-by-twelve-foot paintings on unstretched canvas, three of which portray sphinxes. Through Dec. 23. (Gladstone, 99 Greene St.)

Keith Haring—New paintings. Through Jan. 14. (Shafrazi, 163 Mercer St.)

Claudia Hart—Paintings, sculptures, and photographs in the artist's first solo exhibition. Through Dec. 31. (Hearn, 39 Wooster St.)

Raoul Hague—New sculptures that began as tree trunks. Through Jan. 7. (Lennon, Weinberg, 580 Broadway.)

Jerome Kirk / Alan Dworkowitz—Mobiles. / Drawings of racecars by an artist who works from scale models. Through Dec. 23. (Meisel, 141 Prince St.)

Per Kirkeby—Abstract paintings. Through Dec. 23. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)

Jeff Koons—Porcelain, polychromed wood, and mirrors are used in these new works. Through Dec. 23. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway.)

Vera Lehndorff and Holger Trülzsch—In these photographs, Miss Lehndorff's face and body have been camouflaged with paint so that she is all but lost against a backdrop of swirling fabric. This collaborative show also includes sculptures. Through Dec. 24. (Hanson, 415 West Broadway.)

Eugène Leroy—Nudes, portraits, and landscapes rendered nearly indistinguishable by heavy layers of paint. Through Jan. 21. (Thorp, 103 Prince St.)

Sol LeWitt and Susana Solano—Two sculptures and a couple of works on paper by each artist. Through Dec. 30. (Cervera, a new gallery, at 470 Broome St.)

Jeanne Miles—Geometric paintings. Through Jan. 14. (Pearl, 420 West Broadway.)

Ross Neher—Abstractions. Through Jan. 21. (Beitzel, 113 Greene St.)

Jaume Plensa—A large cast-iron piece entitled "Galileo" is the center of gravity in a group of sculptures and works on paper by a Spanish artist having his first one-man show in New York. Through Jan. 21. (Sharpe, 152 Wooster St.)

Joyce Robins—Bright-colored freestanding ceramic sculptures. Through Dec. 17. (55 Mercer Street Gallery.)

Sam Samore—Works by an artist who hires a photographer to follow people around and catch them in the midst of lighting a cigarette, say, or having a conversation in a restaurant. Through Jan. 14. (American Fine Arts, 40 Wooster St.)

Alan Uglow—Geometric abstractions. Through Dec. 22. (Lorence-Monk, 568 Broadway.)

Karl Wirsum—Cartoonlike paintings, sculptures, and wall reliefs by an artist who worked with Chicago's "Hairy Who" group. Through Jan. 7. (Kind, 136 Greene St.)

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Martin Wong—A large exhibit of new paintings by an artist who really knows how to paint bricks. In paintings of buildings on the Lower East Side, he catalogues the effects of light, weather, and pollution. Through Dec. 23. (Exit Art, 578 Broadway.)

John T. Young—Sculptures by an artist who splits apart boulders, then reassembles them with elaborate steel supports. Through Dec. 31. (O.K. Harris, 383 West Broadway.)

Benefit—The twenty-fifth anniversary of Jasper Johns' Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts is the occasion for shows at Leo Castelli (420 West Broadway) and Brooke Alexander (59 Wooster St.). Castelli has most of the flat works (by Hockney, Rothenberg, and Clemente, to name a very few) and Alexander has primarily 3-D pieces by, for instance, Nauman and Flavin. Through Dec. 30.

Group Shows—At the **brown,** 560 Broadway: Paintings and sculptures by five artists from Edinburgh, including Ian Hamilton Finlay and Richard Long. Through Dec. 23. . . . **davis,** 568 Broadway: Works by more than a hundred painters and sculptors, all of which have price tags of $1,000. Through Dec. 24. . . . **gorney,** 100 Greene St.: Barbara Bloom's etched crystal objects stand out in a show of photographs, paintings, and sculptures. Other artists include Joseph Kosuth and Meyer Vaisman. Through Dec. 23. . . . **ruggiero-henis,** 415 West Broadway: Works on paper by Milton Resnick, Catherine Lee, and Louise Bourgeois, among others. Through Jan. 28. . . . **steinbaum,** 132 Greene St.: Paintings, sculptures, drawings, and assemblages that nod in the direction of "Alice in Wonderland;" Bonnie Lucas, Janet Fish, Keith Haring, and May Stevens are on the roster. Through Jan. 7.

Sculpture—At the **esman,** 70 Greene St.: Small-scale works by Maggie Poor, William Anastasi, Eva Hesse, Win Knowlton, and Carol Hepper, among others. Through Dec. 31. . . . **trabia-mac afee,** 54 Greene St.: "Metaphysical Insights" in pieces by such artists as Petah Coyne, Creighton Michael, and Ellen Driscoll. Through Dec. 23.

OTHER GALLERIES

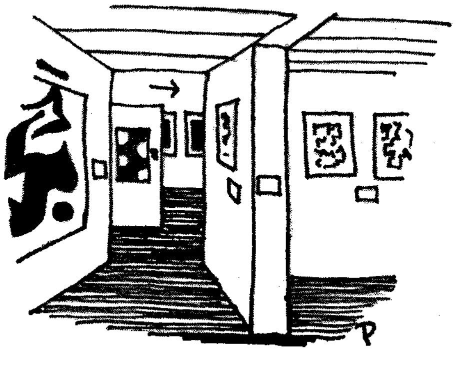
Sara Garden Armstrong—A sculptural installation of giant papier-mâché leaves that rustle in a computer-generated breeze. Through Dec. 24. (Yi, 249 Centre St.)

Chris Britz—Paintings. Through Dec. 22. (Neo Persona, 51 Hudson St. Opens at noon on Saturdays.)

George Condo—Works on paper. Through Dec. 31. (Baghoomian, 611 Broadway.)

Beauford Delaney (1901-79)—Paintings done in New York, Paris, and Knoxville. Through Dec. 22. (Briet, 377 Broome St., between Mott and Mulberry Sts. Open Sundays.)

John Franklin—Assemblages described, tongue in cheek, by the artist as in the "conceptual-folk-art tradition." Through Dec. 22. (Loughelton, 19 Second Ave., at 1st St. Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)



Marilyn Minter—New paintings of two of life's necessities: food and sleep. Through Jan. 14. (White Columns, 325 Spring St., at Greenwich St. Opens at noon.)

James Nares—Abstract wall constructions. Through Dec. 22. (Klein, 611 Broadway.)

A New Gallery—The Illustration Gallery has opened at 330 E. 11th St. with a show definitively titled "Illustration Is Art." The drawings, which have appeared in publications like *The Atlantic*, *Rolling Stone*, and the *Times*, as well as on dust jackets and in cookbooks and advertisements, are by Guy Billout, Vivienne Flesher, Steven Guarnaccia, and Henrik Drescher, among others. Through Jan. 15. (Tuesdays through Thursdays and Sundays, 1 to 7; Fridays and Saturdays, 1 to 11.)

Note—Robert Wilson has donated ten thousand drawings, notes, scripts, and photographs to Columbia University, which has put a hundred or so items on display. The works sketch the creative history of such projects as "Einstein on the Beach" and "The Civil Wars." Through Feb. 17. (Butler Library, Rare Book and Manuscript Room, Broadway at 114th St. Mondays through Fridays, 9 to 4:45.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Kathryn Abbe and Frances McLaughlin-Gill—These twin sisters photographed Brooke Shields, the Kienast Quintuplets, and others as children and as adults, and have mounted the photographs side by side. Through Dec. 23. (Washburn, 41 E. 57th St.)

Irving Penn—Photographs of animal skulls. Through Jan. 14. (Pace-MacGill, 11 E. 57th St.)

Stephen John Phillips—Photographs in which, for instance, a pale-skinned model turning shyly away from the camera might just be a man with a Mohawk. Some of the works appear in futuristic metal-and-Plexiglas frames by the designer Thomas Mann. Through Dec. 22. (Pfeifer, 568 Broadway.)

Artists' Portraits—**timothy greenfield-sanders** exhibiting color portraits of Robert Rauschenberg, Barbara Kruger, and Sherrie Levine, to name a few. Through Dec. 31. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.) . . . **hans namuth** takes on Jasper Johns, Andrew Wyeth, and others. Also, a series on American "tribes" like the Boy Scouts, and another on villagers in Guatemala. Through Dec. 23. (Castelli, 578 Broadway.) . . . **neil winokur** photographs people with their possessions—Chuck Close with his Gehry chair, for instance. The show also includes still-lifes. Through Jan. 14. (Toll, 146 Greene St.)

Group Shows—At the **feldman,** 31 Mercer St.: Photographs taken by issue-conscious freelance photojournalists, including Patt Blue, Catherine Allport, and Jim Lerager. The subjects run from acid rain to the rain forests, and from Howard Beach to South Africa. Through Dec. 30. . . . **international center of photography,** 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.: Marie Cosindas, Irving Penn, Ansel Adams, and Henri Cartier-Bresson, among others, are represented in an exhibit of more than two hundred prints. Through Jan. 8. (Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.) . . . **photofind,** 138 Spring St.: Vintage prints of "New York City in all its glory." About half the photographs were taken by Weegee; the remainder are the work of Berenice Abbott, Walker Evans, and others. Through Jan. 14.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—All the Ingres works in the collections (ten paintings, twenty-two drawings, and seven prints) will go on view starting Dec. 14. . . . ¶ The Costume Institute will exhibit eighty-five outfits from the Victorian era, when some women made a career out of appearing in elaborate attire. The Queen herself made career moves in two of these dresses: at a Crystal Palace exhibition in 1851 and at

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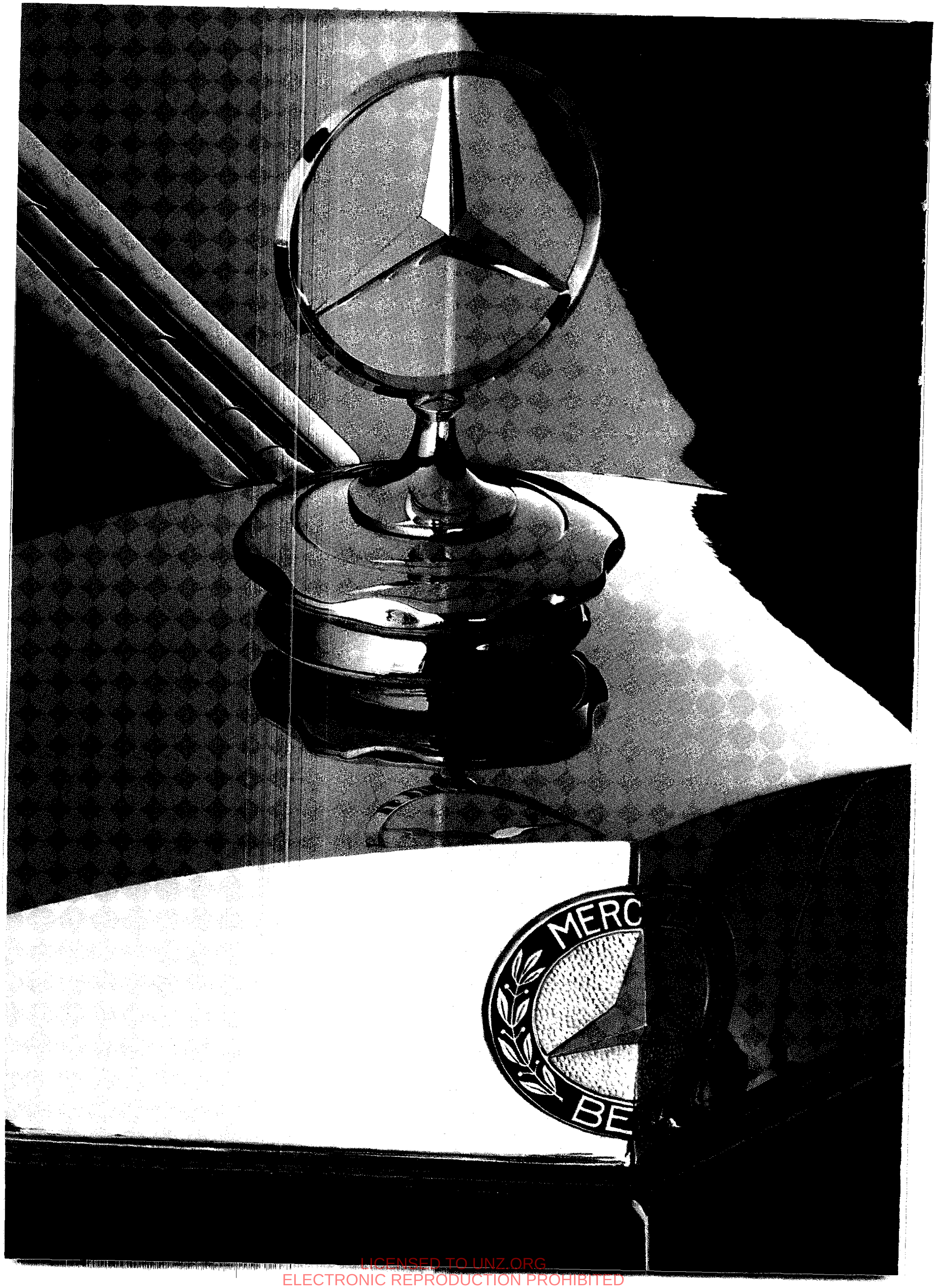
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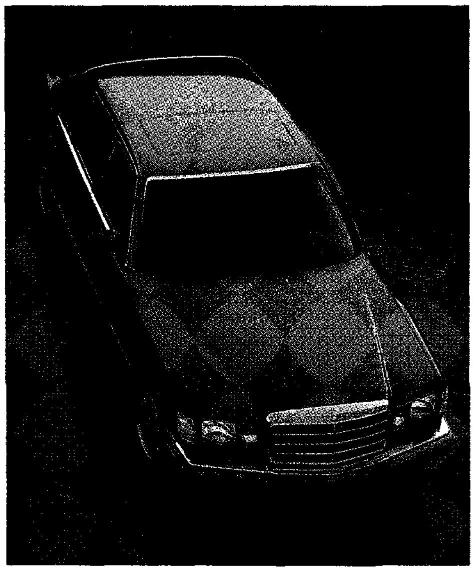

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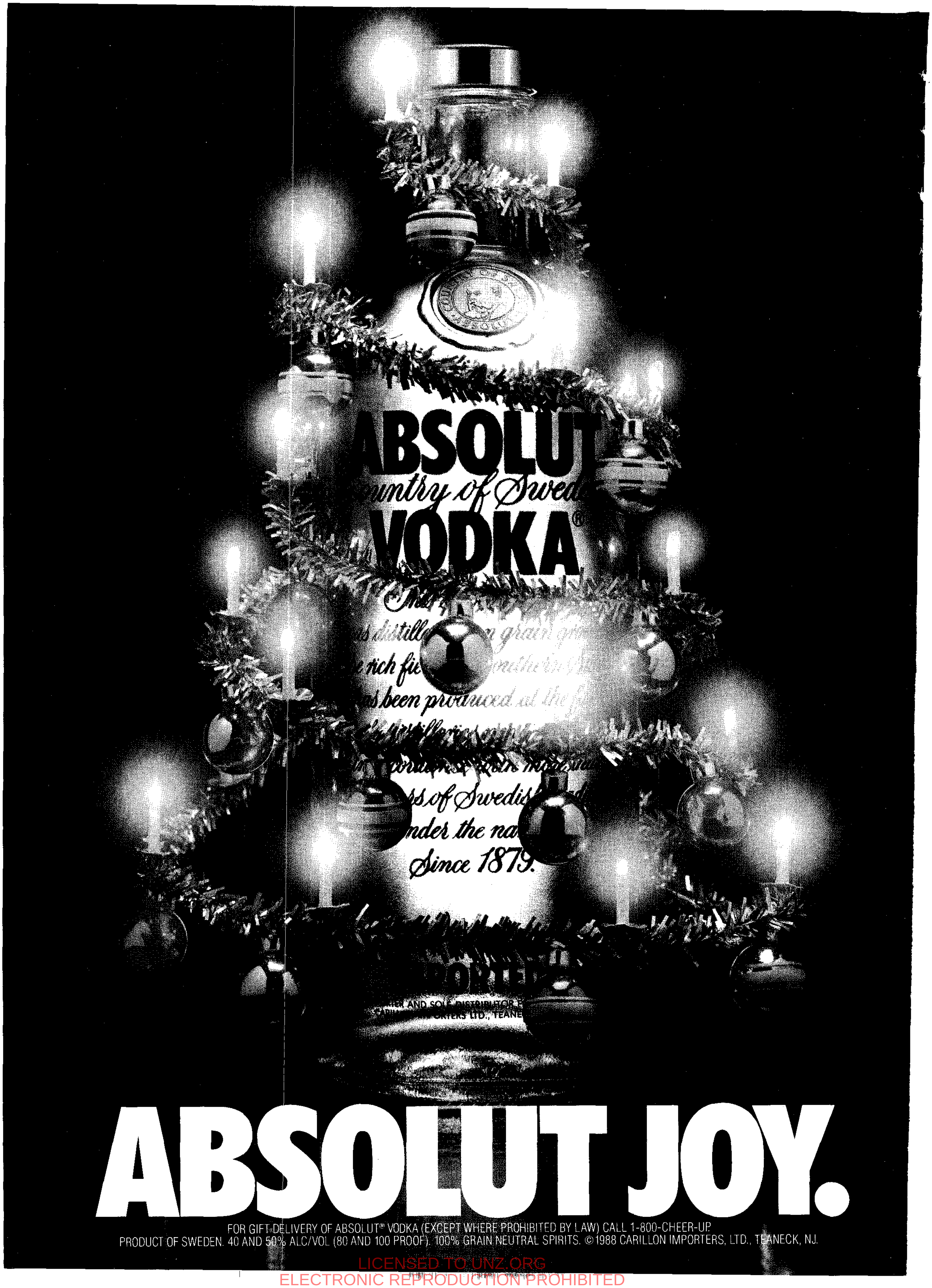
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

ART—Cont'd

her state entry into Paris in 1855. Starts Dec. 15. . . . ¶ The Degas exhibit. Through Jan. 8. . . . ¶ The Georgia O'Keeffe exhibit. Through Feb. 5. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Tuesday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—A retrospective of works by the German painter Anselm Kiefer. Through Jan. 3. . . . ¶ A large show of works on paper by Richard Diebenkorn. Through Jan. 10. A complementary show of new monotypes by Diebenkorn is at the Pamela Auchincloss Gallery, 558 Broadway. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—By combining works in the permanent collections with strategic loans, the museum has pulled together a show of paintings and sculptures which represents all the major art movements since the forties, from Abstract Expressionism to Neo-Expressionism. Some of the borrowed works are by Jenny Holzer and Susan Rothenberg; some of the acquired are by James Turrell, Peter Halley, Jannis Kounellis, and Donald Sultan. Through Jan. 22. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 11 to 7:45, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 4:45.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A twenty-five-year retrospective of Donald Judd's œuvre: paintings, sculptures, and furniture. Through Dec. 31. . . . ¶ An exhibit of paintings by David Park, which reflects his figurative style of the fifties. Through Jan. 15. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—Cleopatra and other rulers of ancient Egypt's Ptolemaic dynasty (305-30 B.C.) are seen in a show of stone statuary and portrait heads. Also from the period are reliefs, gold jewelry, and other objects. Through Jan. 2. . . . ¶ Nearly ninety paintings by Gustave Courbet. Through Jan. 16. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—An exhibition re-creating the events of a four-year (1838-42) American naval expedition to the South Seas and Antarctica and displaying a wealth of materials brought back from the voyage, including charts and maps and flora and fauna. Through Jan. 1. (Open daily. Hours: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5:45; Wednesdays, 10 to 9; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—In what is likely to be a frustrating exhibit for some, the museum has put on view—and view only—a collection of confectionery wonders, such as a six-foot jelly-bean mosaic of the Statue of Liberty and a number of "whimsical chocolate sculptures." "The Confectioner's Art" also features antique and modern tools of the trade. Through Jan. 8. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 10 to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—Just in time for the spending season, here's a show called "Purses, Pockets, Pouches," which includes examples of the netted and the knitted, the drawstring and the throttleneck. The articles on view date from the late sixteenth century right up to 1988. Through March 5. . . . ¶ An exhibit of furniture and decorative arts in the William and Mary style on loan from numerous collections, chiefly those of Windsor Castle; the Rijksmuseum, in Amsterdam; the Bibliothèque Nationale of France; and the Winterthur Museum. Through Feb. 12. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—Celebrated in art circles in nineteenth-century France, François-Marius Granet—painter, curator at the Louvre and Versailles, subject of a famous portrait by Ingres—is just now receiving his first one-man show in this country. It contains sixty landscape watercolors, plus an oil painting that is a version of his "Choir of the Capuchin Church, Rome," a work so popular that the artist made sixteen copies. The Ingres portrait and two portrait studies are also on view. Through Jan. 15. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

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Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—The golem—a figure in Jewish folklore comparable to Frankenstein's monster—has appealed to artists and writers since at least the sixteenth century and, as this survey makes clear, continues to fascinate today's painters, sculptors, and illustrators, among them Saul Steinberg, Charles Simonds, and Louise Fishman. (Open daily except Fridays and Saturdays. Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, noon to 5; Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—An exhibit of drawings and watercolors that cover the whole range of subjects (landscapes, portraiture, genre scenes) favored by German Romanticism, which flourished between 1780 and 1850. Caspar David Friedrich, Philipp O. Runge, and Adolph Menzel are among the artists. Through Jan. 29. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

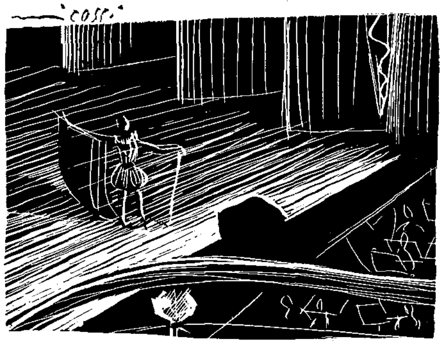
The New Museum, 583 Broadway—A survey of works by Christian Boltanski, a French artist whose sculptures are like time capsules from childhood. Some of the installations are mounted in darkened galleries, evoking the dimness of the past; one is lighted only by six small clamp-on lamps, which focus directly on photographic portraits of high-school students at the Lycée Chases in 1931. Through Feb. 12. A complementary show is at Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. (Open daily except Mondays and Tuesdays. Hours: Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—A historical survey of Hebrew books and manuscripts: Bibles, a seventeenth-century parchment scroll of the Book of Esther, the *Tripartite Mahzor,* and volumes on science, law, and literature. Through Jan. 14. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall. Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8:45.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—Collage paintings by Benny Andrews, dating from the fifties through the seventies. Through Feb. 26. (Open daily except Mondays and Tuesdays. Hours: Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

MUSIC

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Alice Tully Hall 362-1911; for Avery Fisher Hall 874-2424; for Carnegie Hall 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719; and for the Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St., 570-3949. Other box-office numbers are included in the listings.)



CHRISTMAS MUSIC

New Amsterdam Singers—Performing music from England. Directed by Clara Longstreth. (St. Ignatius Episcopal Church, West End Ave. at 87th St. Dec. 13 at 8. Tickets at the door on the evening of the concert.)

I Cantori di New York—Bart Folse directing. (House of the Redeemer, 7 E. 95th St. Dec. 14-15 at 8. For information about tickets, call 289-0399.)

Western Wind—An a-cappella sextet, with the Folger Consort. (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 15 at 8.)

"The Christmas Revels"—Mime troupes, male and female morris dancers, a brass quintet, a children's chorus, actors in medieval costume, and a boar's head contribute to this year's festivities. The audience is invited to sing, dance, and whirl in the aisles. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Dec. 15-16 at 8, Dec. 17 at 3 and 8, and Dec. 18 at 2 and 7.)

St. Cecilia Chorus and Orchestra—David Randolph directing Bach's "Christmas Oratorio," with soloists Nan Nall, soprano; Antoinette Hardin, mezzo-soprano; Michael Best, tenor; and Michael Burt, bass. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 16 at 8.)

Peter, Paul & Mary and the New York Choral Society—Robert DeCormier directing. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 17 at 2:30 and 8.)

"The Shepherds' Christmas"—A new chamber opera derived from the medieval morality play "The Second Shepherds' Play." The music is by William Russo, the libretto by Jon Swan, and the musical direction by Paul C. Echols. (Christ Church United Methodist, Park Ave. at 60th St. Dec. 17 at 6 and 8. For information about tickets, call 226-6211.)

Little Orchestra Society and the Metropolitan Singers / Greek Choral Society—Dino Anagnost directing a program that includes Byzantine chants, a song by Max Reger, carols, and candlelight. (Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, 319 E. 74th St. Dec. 17 at 8. For information about tickets, call 704-2100.)

Ensemble for Early Music—Performing medieval motets and chansons from France. Frederick Renz will conduct. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 17 at 8.)

Waverly Consort—In a program of music of the Middle Ages. (Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. Dec. 18 at 1:30 and 3:30. For information about tickets, call 923-3700.)

Vienna Boys Choir—Singing traditional and contemporary music. (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 18 at 3.)

Jan DeGaetani—Mezzo-soprano, with the Aulos Ensemble. (Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 18 and 22 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

Canticum Novum Singers—Harold Rosenbaum directing, with Walter Hilse, piano. (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 18 at 8.)

Il Piccolo Teatro dell'Opera—With the Brooklyn Philharmonic in "Amahl and the Night Visitors." Constantine Kitsopoulos will conduct, and ten-year-old Adam Plotch will sing the part of Amahl. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Dec. 21-22 at 10:30, noon, and 7.)

New Calliope Singers and the New York Cornet & Sacbut Ensemble—Performing, among other works, the polychoral motets of Michael Praetorius. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Dec. 21 at 8. Admission by contribution.)

New York City Gay Men's Chorus—Gary Miller directing a program called "Noël! Noël!" (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 21-22 at 8.)

Handel's "Messiah"—musica sacra chorus and orchestra: Richard Westenburg directing, with Marvis Martin, soprano; Paul Esswood, countertenor; Vinson Cole, tenor; and Jan Opalach, bass. (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 12 and 16 at 8.) . . . **orchestra of st. luke's:** Trevor Pinnock conducting and playing the

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MUSIC—Cont'd

harpsichord, with Arleen Augér, soprano; Catherine Robbin, mezzo-soprano; Howard Crook, tenor; and Stephen Richardson, bass. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 15 at 8.) . . . **MASTERWORK CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA:** David Randolph directing, with vocal soloists. (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 17 at 2:30. . . . ¶ Carnegie Hall. Dec. 18 at 2:30 and 6:30.) . . . **ST. THOMAS CHOIR:** Gerre Hancock directing the choir, Concert Royal, and vocal soloists. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. Dec. 20 and Dec. 22 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 757-7013.) . . . **ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK:** Lyndon Woodside directing, with vocal soloists and an orchestra. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 20 at 8.) . . . **HANDEL & HAYDN SOCIETY:** Christopher Hogwood directing the society's chorus, a small orchestra, and vocal soloists. (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 21 at 7:30.)

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—Dec. 12 at 8: "Aida," with Leona Mitchell, Fiorenza Cossotto, Placido Domingo, and Sherrill Milnes; conducted by James Levine. . . . ¶ Dec. 13 at 8: "Cavalleria Rusticana," with Ghena Dimitrova, Ermanno Mauro, and Alain Fondary; and "Pagliacci," with Diana Soviero, Ermanno Mauro, and Juan Pons. Alessandro Siciliani conducting both. . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 8: "Carmen," with Marilyn Horne, Mirella Freni, Veriano Luchetti, and Samuel Ramey; Placido Domingo. . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 8: "Le Nozze di Figaro," with Roberta Alexander, Hei-Kyung Hong, Anne Sofie von Otter, John Cheek, and Thomas Hampson; Mark Elder. . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 8: "Aida," with Leona Mitchell, Fiorenza Cossotto, Placido Domingo, and Sherrill Milnes; James Levine. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 1:30: "Carmen," with Marilyn Horne, Mirella Freni, Veriano Luchetti, and Samuel Ramey; Placido Domingo. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 8: "Madame Butterfly," with Yoko Watanabe, Brenda Boozer, Giorgio Lamberti, and Brian Schexnayder; Myung-Whun Chung. . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 8: "Le Nozze di Figaro," with Roberta Alexander, Hei-Kyung Hong, Anne Sofie von Otter, John Cheek, and Thomas Hampson; Mark Elder. . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 8: "Aida," with Leona Mitchell, Fiorenza Cossotto, Placido Domingo, and Sherrill Milnes; James Levine. . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 7: "Hansel and Gretel," with Judith Blegen, Frederica von Stade, and Janis Martin; Christof Perick.

GOLDEN FLEECE LTD.—One-act operas by Lou Rodgers, Jack Gottlieb, Memrie Innerarity, and John David Earnest; conducted by Miss Rodgers. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. Dec. 13 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

AMATO OPERA COMPANY—Presenting "Falstaff." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Dec. 16-17 at 7:30. Through Jan. 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—At Avery Fisher Hall, Zubin Mehta conducting. Dec. 13 at 8: With Leon Fleisher, piano. . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 8, Dec. 16 at 2, Dec. 17 at 8, and Dec. 20 at 7:30: Messiaen's "Et Exspecto Resurrectionem Mortuorem," in honor of the composer's eightieth birthday. Mozart's "Serenade for Winds" is also on the program.

"MEET THE MODERNS"—Lukas Foss conducting the Brooklyn Philharmonic, with Marni Nixon and Jeanine Thames, sopranos, and Chris Finckel, cello. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Dec. 14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-718 622-1000.)

PRISM—Robert Black conducting. (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 14 at 8.)

PHILHARMONIA VIRTUOSI—Richard Kapp conducting the complete Brandenburg Concertos. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Dec. 16 at 8.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY—Jens Nygaard conducting. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 19 at 8.)

Y CHORALE—Amy Kaiser directing. (Central Synagogue, Lexington Ave. at 55th St. Dec. 20 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

RECITALS

NEW YORK PHILOMUSICA—Playing Haydn under the starry skies of the planetarium. (American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 81st St. Dec. 13 and 15 at 7 and 9. For information about tickets, call 769-5907.)

CHAMBER MUSIC AT THE Y—With Paula Robison, flute; Frank Morelli, bassoon; David Jolley, horn; Jaime Laredo, violin; Ida Kavafian, viola; and others. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Dec. 13-14 at 8.)

ROBERT GOLDSAND—Piano. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 14 at 8.)

ANNE-SOPHIE MUTTER—Violin. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 14 at 8.)

JOSEPH SWENSEN AND JEFFREY KAHANE—The first of two concerts in which Schubert's entire repertoire for violin and piano will be performed. (Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 15 at 8.)

AMERICAN STRING QUARTET—In the third of its six-concert series of all the Beethoven quartets. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Dec. 15 at 8. *Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.*)

MICHAEL BLUM—Piano. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Dec. 15 at 8.)

ZARA NELSOVA—Cello. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Dec. 15 at 8. For information about tickets, call 874-7515.)

GALIMIR STRING QUARTET—In a Mozart-Webern-Beethoven program. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Dec. 16 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

DANIEL EPSTEIN—Piano. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Dec. 16 at 8.)

BEAUX ARTS TRIO—Playing Beethoven. (Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 16-17 at 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER—Presenting three performances of a Franck-Mozart-Fauré program, with Emanuel Ax, piano, and artists of the society. (Paula Cooper Gallery, 155 Wooster St. Dec. 17 at 6. Tickets at the door one hour before the concert. . . . ¶ Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 18 at 5 and Dec. 20 at 7:30.)

HÅKAN HAGEGÅRD—Baritone, singing the New York première of Dominick Argento's "Andrée Expedition" and other works. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Dec. 17 at 8.)

MENDELSSOHN STRING QUARTET—With Evelyn Lear, soprano; Ursula Oppens and Ned Rorem, piano; and others. (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 17 at 8.)

LYUDMILA SANDOVSKAYA—Piano. (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 18 at 3.)

FOR THE LOVE OF MUSIC—With Richard Sortomme, violin; Jon Klibonoff, piano; and Jeffrey Solow, cello. (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 20 at 8.)

RICHARD SHER—Cello. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Dec. 20 at 8.)

NINA BEILINA—Violin. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 21 at 8.)

SPORTS

(The ticket-information number for Madison Square Garden is 563-8300, for the Meadowlands 1-201 935-3900, and for Nassau Coliseum 1-516 587-9222.)

BASKETBALL—At **MADISON SQUARE GARDEN:** Knicks vs. Nets, Dec. 13 at 8. . . . ¶ Knicks vs. Utah Jazz, Dec. 15 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Knicks vs. Washington Bullets, Dec. 17 at 7:30. . . . **BYRNE MEADOWLANDS ARENA:** Nets vs. Los Angeles Lakers, Dec. 14 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Nets vs. Philadelphia 76ers, Dec. 16 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Nets vs. Dallas Mavericks, Dec. 21 at 7:30.

FOOTBALL—Jets vs. Giants. (Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands. Dec. 18 at 1.)

HOCKEY—At **MADISON SQUARE GARDEN:** Rangers vs. Los Angeles Kings, Dec. 12. . . . ¶ Rangers vs. Islanders, Dec. 14. . . . ¶ Rangers vs. Washington Capitals, Dec. 19. . . . ¶ Rangers vs. Buffalo Sabres, Dec. 21. (Games begin at 7:30.) . . . **BYRNE MEADOWLANDS ARENA:** Devils vs. St. Louis Blues, Dec. 13 at 7:45. . . . ¶ Devils vs. Toronto Maple Leafs, Dec. 15 at 7:45. . . . **NASSAU COLISEUM:** Islanders vs. Pittsburgh Penguins, Dec. 15 at 8:05. . . . ¶ Islanders vs. Devils, Dec. 17 at 7:05.

RACING—At **AQUEDUCT:** Daily, except Tuesdays, at 12:30. . . . **MEADOWLANDS:** Weeknights at 7:30; through Dec. 31.

TROTTING—At Yonkers Raceway: Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

EAST SIDE

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171; theatre opens in the late afternoon and is closed Mondays.)

Through Dec. 15: "Gonza the Spearman" (1986; directed by Masahiro Shinoda; in Japanese).

Dec. 16: "The House of Bernarda Alba" (1987; Mario Camus; in Spanish).

Dec. 17 at 4:30: "The Singing Detective" (Jon Amiel), with Michael Gambon. The seven-hour British television series, shown complete at one sitting, with an intermission.

From Dec. 18: "The House of Bernarda Alba."

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)

Theatre 1: "Tequila Sunrise" (Robert Towne), with Mel Gibson, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Kurt Russell.

Theatre 2: "The Naked Gun" (David Zucker), with Leslie Nielsen.

Theatre 3: Through Dec. 13: "Tequila Sunrise." From Dec. 14: "Torch Song Trilogy" (Paul Bogart), with Anne Bancroft, Matthew Broderick, Harvey Fierstein, and Brian Kerwin.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)

(Matinées only) "Oliver & Company" (George Scribner), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Things Change" (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)

"Twins" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)

Theatre 1: Through Dec. 13: "The Accused" (Jonathan Kaplan), with Kelly McGillis and Jodie Foster. From Dec. 14: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (Frank Oz), with Steve Martin and Michael Caine.

Theatre 2: "Scrooged" (†).

Theatre 3: Through Dec. 15: "Child's Play" (Tom Holland), with Catherine Hicks, Chris Sarandon, and Alex Vincent. From Dec. 16: "Rain Man" (Barry Levinson), with Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)

"My Stepmother Is an Alien" (Richard Benjamin), with Dan Aykroyd and Kim Basinger.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)

Through Dec. 13: "Mystic Pizza" (†).

From Dec. 14: "The Naked Gun" (David Zucker), with Leslie Nielsen.

Sutton, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)

"Tequila Sunrise" (Robert Towne), with Mel Gibson, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Kurt Russell.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)

"Cocoon: The Return" (Daniel Petrie).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)

Through Dec. 13: "The Land Before Time" (Don Bluth), an animated film.

From Dec. 14: "Madame Sousatzka" (†).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)

Theatre 1: "Twins" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito.

Theatre 2: "My Stepmother Is an Alien" (Richard Benjamin), with Dan Aykroyd and Kim Basinger.

D. W. Griffith, 235 E. 59th. (759-4630)

"The Accused" (Jonathan Kaplan), with Kelly McGillis and Jodie Foster.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)

Theatre 1: "Twins" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito.

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 20: "A Cry in the Dark" (†). From Dec. 21: "Working Girl" (Mike Nichols), with Harrison Ford, Sigourney Weaver, and Melanie Griffith.

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)

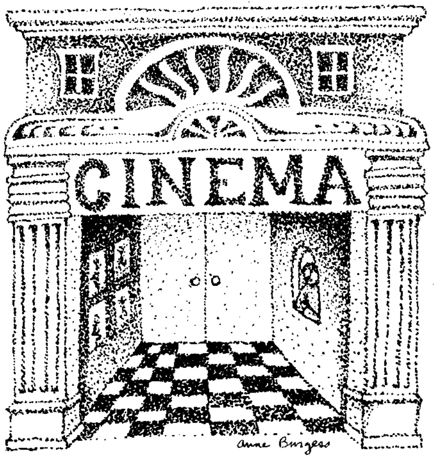
Theatre 1: "Scrooged" (†).

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 13: "The Naked Gun" (David Zucker), with Leslie Nielsen. From Dec. 14: "Torch Song Trilogy" (Paul Bogart), with Anne Bancroft, Matthew Broderick, Harvey Fierstein, and Brian Kerwin.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)

Through Dec. 20: "Everybody's All-American" (Taylor Hackford), with Jessica Lange, Dennis Quaid, and Timothy Hutton.

From Dec. 21: "Talk Radio" (Oliver Stone), with Eric Bogosian.



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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 23.

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)

Theatre 1: Through Dec. 13: "1969" (Ernest Thompson), with Robert Downey, Jr., and Kiefer Sutherland. From Dec. 14: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (Frank Oz), with Steve Martin and Michael Caine.

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 15: "Child's Play" (Tom Holland), with Catherine Hicks, Chris Sarandon, and Alex Vincent. From Dec. 16: "Rain Man" (Barry Levinson), with Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)

Through Dec. 20: "Crossing Delancey" (Joan Micklin Silver), with Amy Irving and Peter Riegert.

From Dec. 21: "Dangerous Liaisons" (Stephen Frears), with Glenn Close, John Malkovich, and Michelle Pfeiffer.

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)

"Mississippi Burning" (Alan Parker), with Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe.

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)

"Twins" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito.

Loews Orpheum 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (289-4607)

Theatre 1: "The Naked Gun" (David Zucker), with Leslie Nielsen.

Theatre 2: "Scrooged" (†).

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)

Theatre 1: "Tequila Sunrise" (Robert Towne), with Mel Gibson, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Kurt Russell.

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 20: "Oliver & Company" (George Scribner), an animated film. From Dec. 21: "Working Girl" (Mike Nichols), with Harrison Ford, Sigourney Weaver, and Melanie Griffith.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum 1 and 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590; Mondays through Fridays, theatres open in the late afternoon.)

Theatre 1: Through Dec. 13: "Retracing Steps: American Dance Since Postmodernism" (directed by Michael Blackwood), a documentary. From Dec. 14: "Sierra Leone" (1987; Uwe Schrader; in German).

Theatre 2: See listings under "Revival Houses."

Bleecker St. Cinema 1 and 2, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560)

Theatre 1: "Wings of Desire" ("Der Himmel über Berlin") (†).

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 20: (Separate admissions) "Amerika, Terra Incognita;" and "We the Living" (1942; Goffredo Alessandrini; in Italian), with Alida Valli and Rossano Brazzi. From Dec. 21: "A Forgotten Tune for the Flute" (1987; Eldar Ryazanov; in Russian).

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)

Theatre 1: "Madame Sousatzka" (†).

Theatre 2: "My Stepmother Is an Alien" (Richard Benjamin), with Dan Aykroyd and Kim Basinger.

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515; Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)

"Cocoon: The Return" (Daniel Petrie).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)

Theatre 1: "Twins" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito.

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 20: "A Cry in the Dark" (†). From Dec. 21: "Working Girl" (Mike Nichols), with Harrison Ford, Sigourney Weaver, and Melanie Griffith.

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)

Theatre 1: "Mystic Pizza" (†).

Theatre 2: "Bagdad Café" (†).

Theatre 3: "Spike of Bensonhurst" (Paul Morrissey), with Sasha Mitchell and Ernest Borgnine.

Theatre 4: "Matador" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)

Theatre 1: "Crossing Delancey" (Joan Micklin Silver), with Amy Irving and Peter Riegert.

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 20: (Matinées only) "The Land Before Time" (Don Bluth), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Gorillas in the Mist" (†). From Dec. 21: "Working Girl" (Mike Nichols), with Harrison Ford, Sigourney Weaver, and Melanie Griffith.

Theatre 3: "Twins" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)

Through Dec. 13: "Oliver & Company" (George Scribner), an animated film.

From Dec. 14: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (Frank Oz), with Steve Martin and Michael Caine.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)

"Cocoon: The Return" (Daniel Petrie).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)

Dec. 12: "Full Moon in Blue Water" (Peter Masterson), with Gene Hackman, Teri Garr, Burgess Meredith, and Elias Koteas.

From Dec. 13: Theatre temporarily closed.

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)

"Things Change" (†).

Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)

Through Dec. 13: "Madame Sousatzka" (†).

From Dec. 14: "Torch Song Trilogy" (Paul Bogart), with Anne Bancroft, Matthew Broderick, Harvey Fierstein, and Brian Kerwin.

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)

Through Dec. 20: "We the Living" (1942; Goffredo Alessandrini; in Italian), with Alida Valli and Rossano Brazzi.

From Dec. 21: "A Forgotten Tune for the Flute" (1987; Eldar Ryazanov; in Russian).

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (688-2013)

"Another Woman" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)

"The Last Temptation of Christ" (†).

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)

Through Dec. 15: "The Accused" (Jonathan Kaplan), with Kelly McGillis and Jodie Foster.

From Dec. 16: "Rain Man" (Barry Levinson), with Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise.

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)

Theatre 1: Through Dec. 20: "The Thin Blue Line" (†). From Dec. 21: "Pelle the Con-

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

querour" (Bille August; in Danish and Swedish), with Max von Sydow.

Theatre 2: "Salaam Bombay!" (Mira Nair; in Hindi).

Theatre 3: Through Dec. 20: "Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie" (Marcel Ophuls; in English, French, German, and Spanish), a four-hour-and-twenty-seven-minute documentary. From Dec. 21: "Pelle the Conqueror."

Cinema Studio 1 and 2, B'way at 66th. (877-4040)

Theatre 1: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (†).

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 15: "Nobody Listened" (Néstor Almendros and Jorge Ulla), a documentary. From Dec. 16: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)

Through Dec. 20: "Everybody's All-American" (Taylor Hackford), with Jessica Lange, Dennis Quaid, and Timothy Hutton.

From Dec. 21: "Working Girl" (Mike Nichols), with Harrison Ford, Sigourney Weaver, and Melanie Griffith.

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)

Theatre 1: "Tequila Sunrise" (Robert Towne), with Mel Gibson, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Kurt Russell.

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 13: "Child's Play" (Tom Holland), with Catherine Hicks, Chris Sarandon, and Alex Vincent. From Dec. 14: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (Frank Oz), with Steve Martin and Michael Caine.

Theatre 3: "Mississippi Burning" (Alan Parker), with Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe.

Theatre 4: "The Naked Gun" (David Zucker), with Leslie Nielsen.

Theatre 5: "Scrooged" (†).

Theatre 6: "My Stepmother Is an Alien" (Richard Benjamin), with Dan Aykroyd and Kim Basinger.

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)

Theatre 1: Through Dec. 15: "Cocoon: The Return" (Daniel Petrie). From Dec. 16: To be announced.

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 15: (Matinées only) "The Land Before Time" (Don Bluth), an animated film; and (evenings only) "A Cry in the Dark" (†). From Dec. 16: To be announced.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)

Theatre 1: "Twins" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito.

Theatre 2: "Twins."

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)

Theatre 1: "A Cry in the Dark" (†).

Theatre 2: "Tequila Sunrise" (directed by Robert Towne), with Mel Gibson, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Kurt Russell.

Theatre 3: "High Spirits" (†).

Theatre 4: Through Dec. 20: "Night of the Demons" (Kevin S. Tenney). From Dec. 21: "Working Girl" (Mike Nichols), with Harrison Ford, Sigourney Weaver, and Melanie Griffith.

Theatre 5: "Spike of Bensonhurst" (Paul Morrissey), with Sasha Mitchell and Ernest Borgnine.

Theatre 6: "Iron Eagle II" (Sidney J. Furie), with Louis Gossett, Jr.

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (757-2408)

"The Naked Gun" (David Zucker), with Leslie Nielsen.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)

Theatre 2: "The Naked Gun" (David Zucker), with Leslie Nielsen.

Theatre 3: Through Dec. 13: "Child's Play" (Tom Holland), with Catherine Hicks, Chris Sarandon, and Alex Vincent. From Dec. 14: (Matinées only) "Oliver & Company" (George Scribner), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Child's Play."

Theatre 4: Through Dec. 13: "Dakota" (Fred Holmes), with Lou Diamond Phillips. From Dec. 14: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (Frank Oz), with Steve Martin and Michael Caine.

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)

"Scrooged" (†).

Movieland, B'way at 47th. (757-8320)

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"The Land Before Time" (Don Bluth), an animated film.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)

Theatre 1: "Twins" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito.

Theatre 2: "Twins."

Warner, 7th Ave. between 42nd and 43rd. (764-6760)

"My Stepmother Is an Alien" (Richard Benjamin), with Dan Aykroyd and Kim Basinger.

REVIVAL HOUSES

Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)

Dec. 12: "On the Town" (1949; directed by Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly), with Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Jules Munshin, Betty Garrett, Vera-Ellen, and Ann Miller; and "West Side Story" (1961; Robert Wise), with Natalie Wood, Richard Beymer, Russ Tamblyn, Rita Moreno, and George Chakiris.

Dec. 13-14: "Coney Island" (1943; Walter Lang), with Betty Grable, George Montgomery, Cesar Romero, and Charles Winninger; and "42nd Street" (1933; Lloyd Bacon), with Bebe Daniels, Ruby Keeler, Dick Powell, and Warner Baxter.

Dec. 15: "The Wiz" (†) and "Lady Sings the Blues" (†).

Dec. 16-17: "Ziegfeld Girl" (1941; Robert Z. Leonard), with Judy Garland, Hedy Lamarr, Lana Turner, and James Stewart; and "Cover Girl" (†).

Dec. 18-19: "Tin Pan Alley" (1940; Walter Lang), with Alice Faye, Jack Oakie, and Betty Grable; and "Deep in My Heart" (1954; Stanley Donen), with José Ferrer, Merle Oberon, and Helen Traubel.

Dec. 20-21: "Young Man with a Horn" (1950; Michael Curtiz), with Kirk Douglas and Lauren Bacall; and "The Eddy Duchin Story" (1956; George Sidney), with Tyrone Power, Kim Novak, and Victoria Shaw.

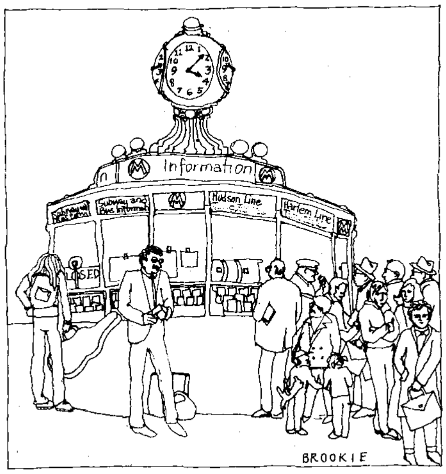
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)

Through Dec. 13: "Annie Hall" (1977; Woody Allen), with Allen and Diane Keaton; and "Manhattan" (1979; Woody Allen), with Allen, Diane Keaton, Michael Murphy, and Meryl Streep.

Dec. 14-15: "Bum Rap" (1988; Daniel Irom), with Craig Wasson and Blanche Baker; and "The Last Picture Show" (1971; Peter Bogdanovich), with Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges, Cybill Shepherd, Ben Johnson, and Cloris Leachman.

Dec. 16-17: "On the Waterfront" (1954; Elia Kazan), with Marlon Brando, Lee J. Cobb, Eva Marie Saint, Karl Malden, and Rod Steiger; and "The Wild One" (1954; Laslo Benedek), with Marlon Brando, Mary Murphy, and Lee Marvin.

Dec. 18: "Das Boot" (†); and "The Tin Drum" (1980; Volker Schlöndorff; in German), with David Bennent.



Dec. 19-20: "Harold and Maude" (1971; Hal Ashby), with Ruth Gordon and Bud Cort; and "King of Hearts" (1967; Philippe de Broca; in French and English), with Alan Bates and Geneviève Bujold.

From Dec. 21: "La Dolce Vita" (1960; Federico Fellini; in Italian), with Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg.

Film Forum 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590; Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)

Dec. 12: "Greed" (1924; Erich von Stroheim; a silent film), with Gibson Gowland, ZaSu Pitts, and Jean Hersholt; and "Potemkin" (1925; Sergei Eisenstein; a Russian silent film).

Dec. 13-14: "The Horse Thief" (1986; Tian Zhuangzhuang).

Dec. 15-17: "Alice" (1988; Jan Švankmajer), an animated film.

Dec. 18-20: "The Legend of Suram Fortress" (1985; Sergei Paradjanov and Dodo Abashidze; in Georgian).

From Dec. 21: "Red-Headed Woman" (1932; Jack Conway), with Jean Harlow, Chester Morris, and Charles Boyer; and "Baby Face" (1933; Alfred E. Green), with Barbara Stanwyck, John Wayne, and George Brent.

Thalia SoHo, 15 Vandam St. (675-0498)

Dec. 12: "Stormy Weather" (1943; Andrew Stone), with Bill Robinson, Fats Waller, Cab Calloway, and Dooley Wilson; and "Sun Valley Serenade" (1941; H. Bruce Humberstone), with Sonja Henie, John Payne, and Lynn Bari.

Dec. 13: "Interiors" (1978; Woody Allen), with Diane Keaton, Maureen Stapleton, Geraldine Page, Mary Beth Hurt, Sam Waterston, and E. G. Marshall; and "Face to Face" (1976; Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Liv Ullmann, Erland Josephson, and Gunnar Björnstrand.

Dec. 14: "The Corpse Came C.O.D." (1947; Henry Levin), with George Brent and Joan Blondell; and "The Fuller Brush Girl" (1950; Lloyd Bacon), with Lucille Ball, Eddie Albert, and Lee Patrick.

Dec. 15: "Love Streams" (1984; John Cassavetes), with Cassavetes and Gena Rowlands; and "Gloria" (1980; John Cassavetes), with Gena Rowlands, John Adames, and Buck Henry.

Dec. 16-17: "Broadcast News" (1987; James L. Brooks), with William Hurt, Albert Brooks, and Holly Hunter; and "Network" (†).

Dec. 18: "Mother" (†) and "Earth" (†).

Dec. 19: "Stand Up and Cheer" (1934; Hamilton McFadden), with Warner Baxter, Madge Evans, Shirley Temple, and James Dunn; and "Thanks a Million" (1937; Roy del Ruth), with Fred Allen and Dick Powell.

Dec. 20: "Open City" (1945; Roberto Rossellini; in Italian), with Anna Magnani; and "Fear" (1956; Roberto Rossellini), with Ingrid Bergman.

Dec. 21: "One Way Passage" (1932; Tay Garnett), with William Powell, Kay Francis, and Aline MacMahon; and "I Found Stella Parish" (1935; Mervyn LeRoy), with Kay Francis.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

Dec. 12: "The Testament of Dr. Cordelier" (1959; Jean Renoir; in French); and "The Little Theatre of Jean Renoir" (1969; Jean Renoir; in French), with Jeanne Moreau, Françoise Arnoul, and Fernand Sardou.

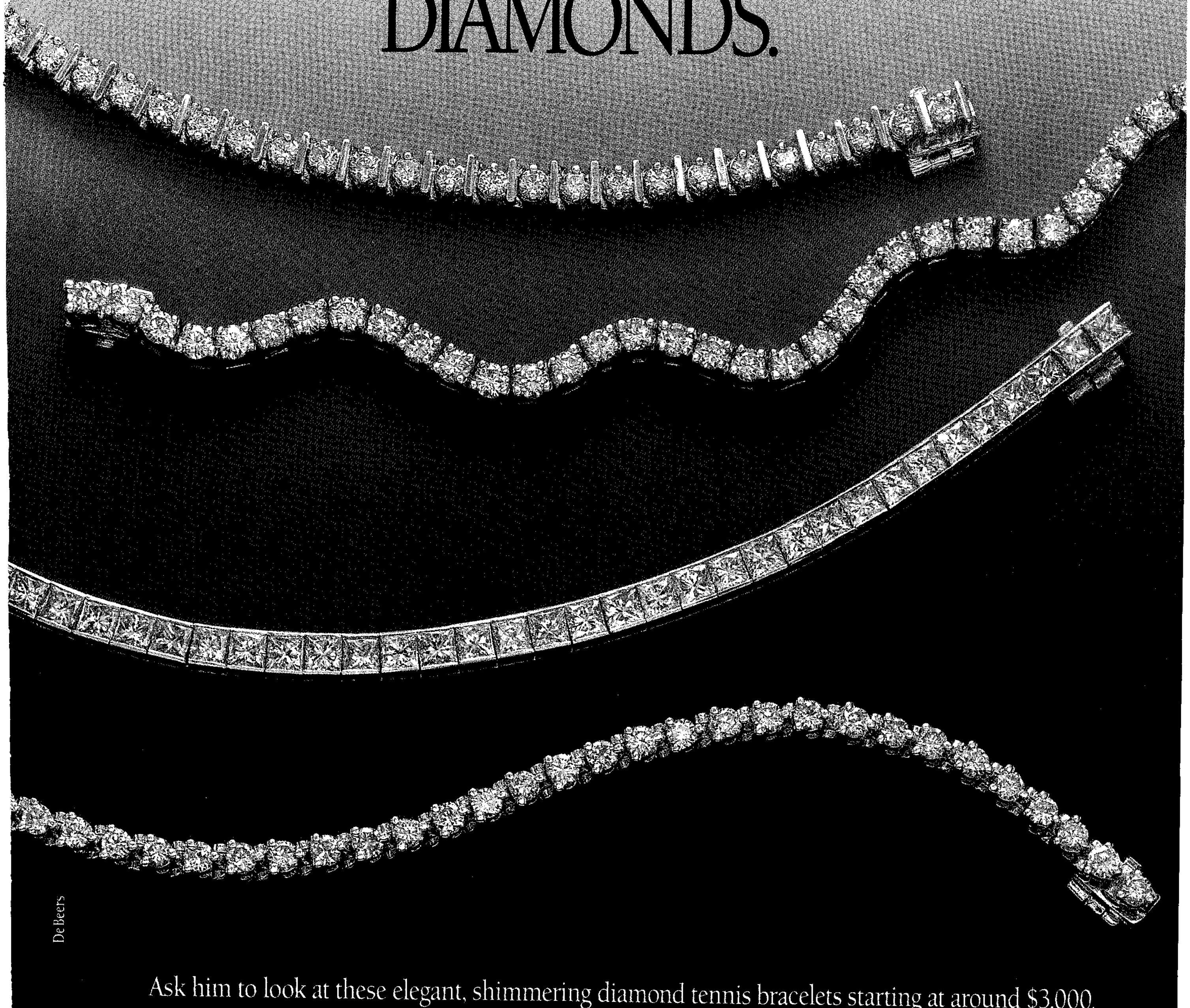
Dec. 13: "Les Biches" (1968; Claude Chabrol; in French), with Jacqueline Sassard, Jean-Louis Trintignant, and Stéphane Audran; and "My Life to Live" (1962; Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Anna Karina.

Dec. 14: "Will Penny" (1968; Tom Gries), with Charlton Heston and Joan Hackett; and "Man of the West" (1958; Anthony Mann), with Gary Cooper, Julie London, Arthur O'Connell, and Lee J. Cobb.

Dec. 15: "Mean Streets" (1973; Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, and Amy Robinson; and "Bang the Drum Slowly" (1973; John Hancock), with Michael Moriarty and Robert De Niro.

Dec. 16-17: "Butterfield 8" (1960; Daniel Mann), with Elizabeth Taylor, Laurence Harvey, Eddie Fisher, and Dina Merrill;

WHEN THE SCORE IS LOVE, SUGGEST HE SERVE DIAMONDS.



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He's always offering to help improve your backhand. Take him up on it. Your jeweler can show him many beautiful styles in a variety of carat-weights. Any of which is sure to win points with you. And will help keep the match interesting.

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A diamond is forever.

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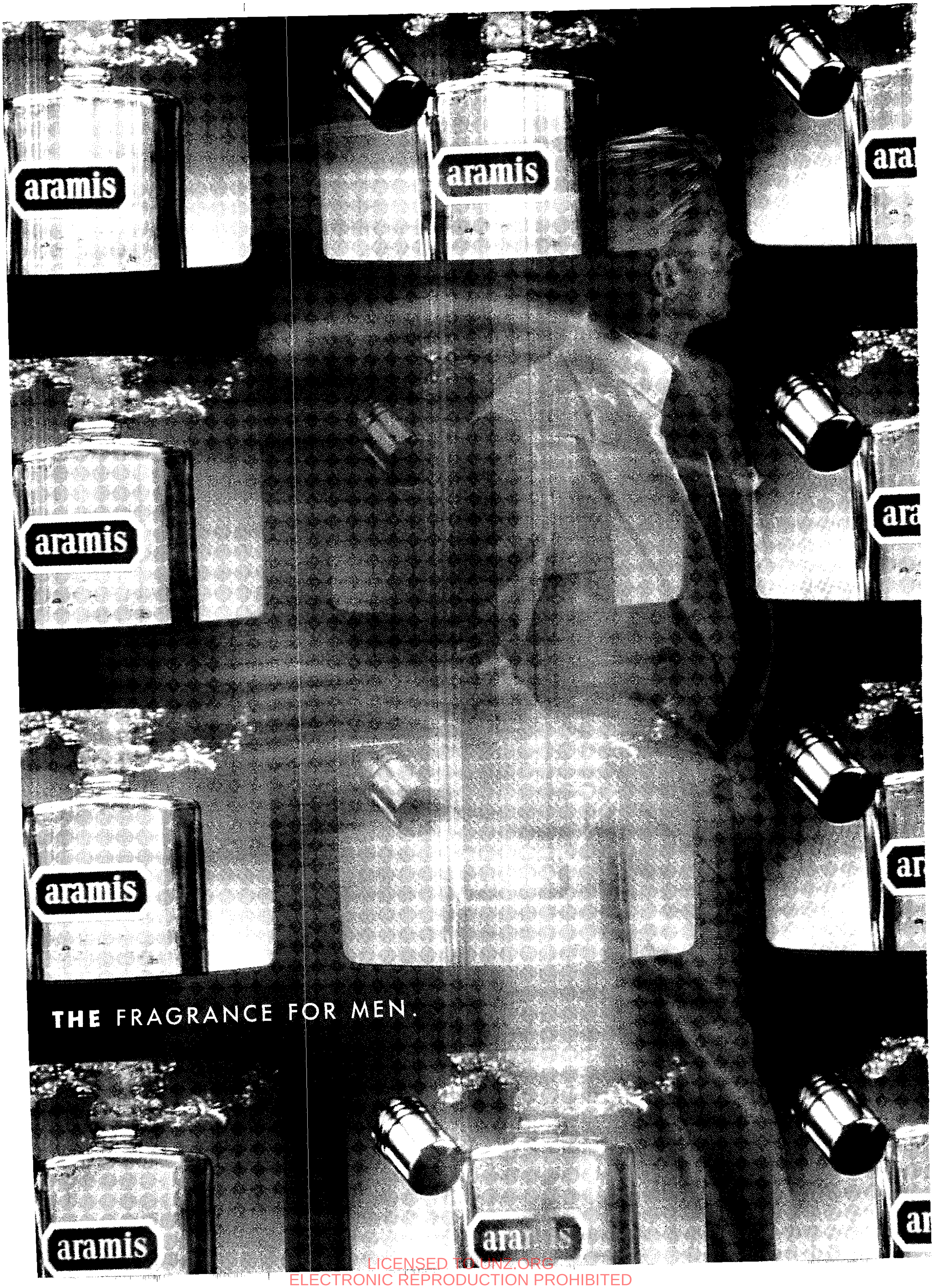
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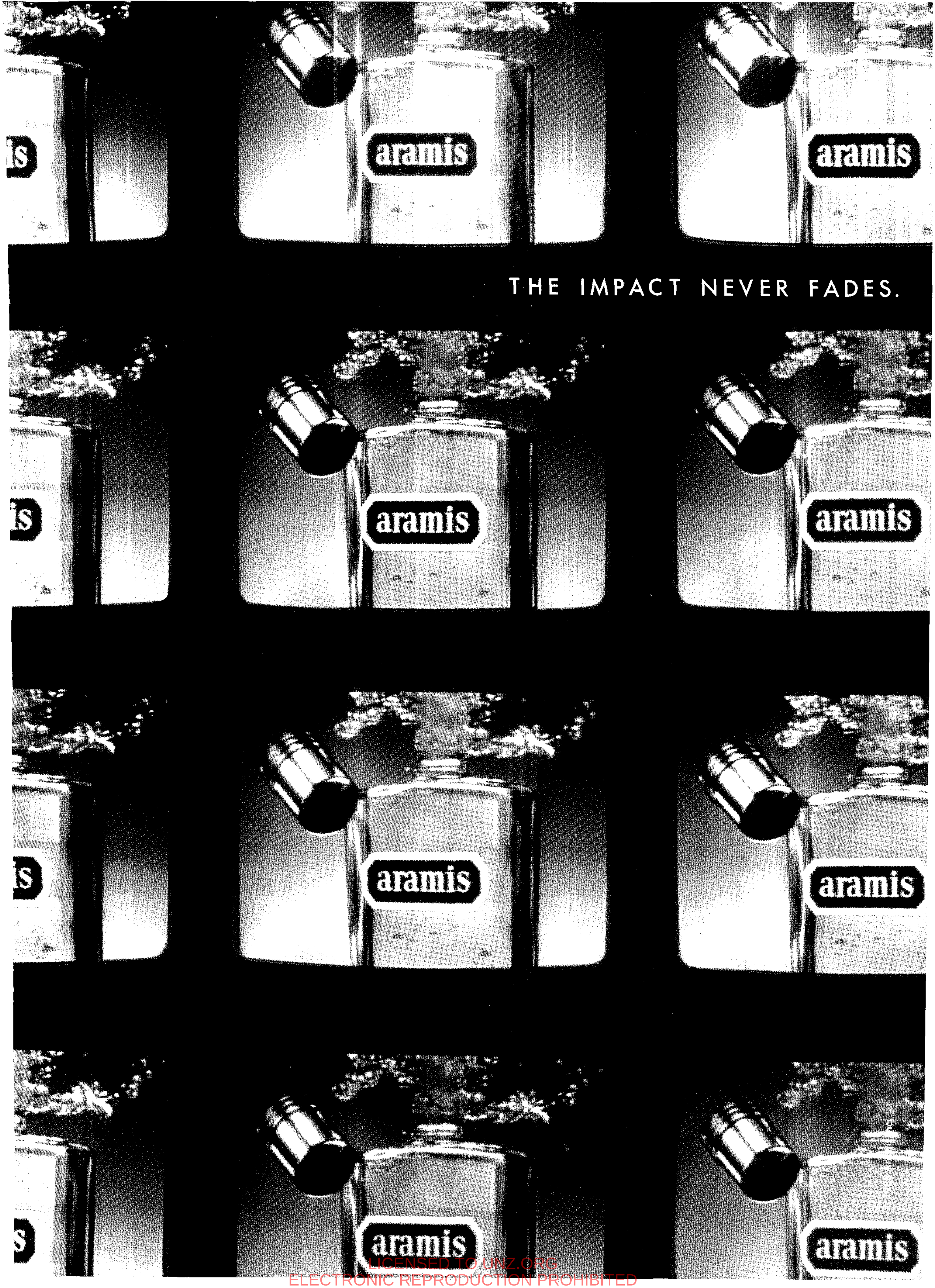
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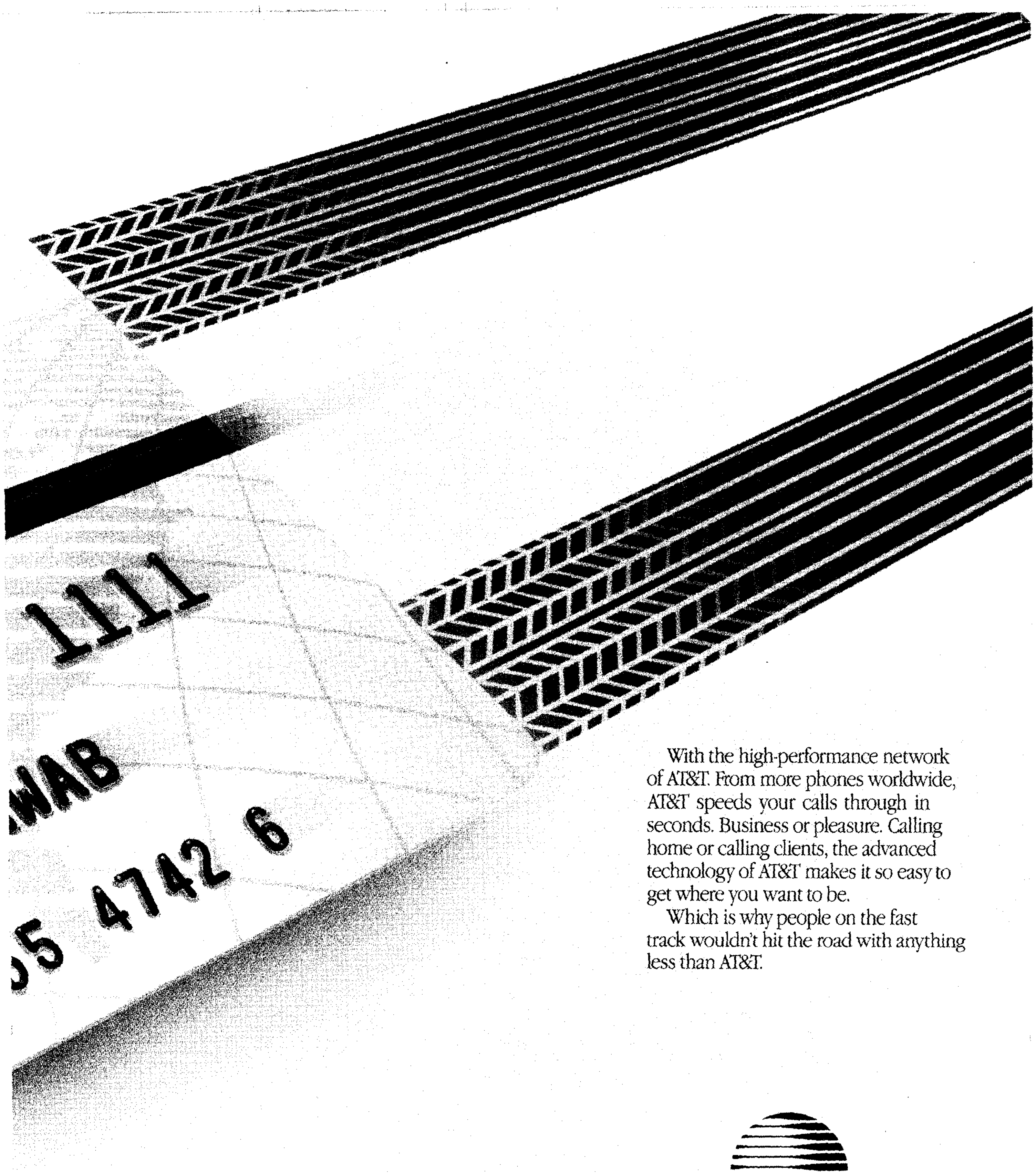

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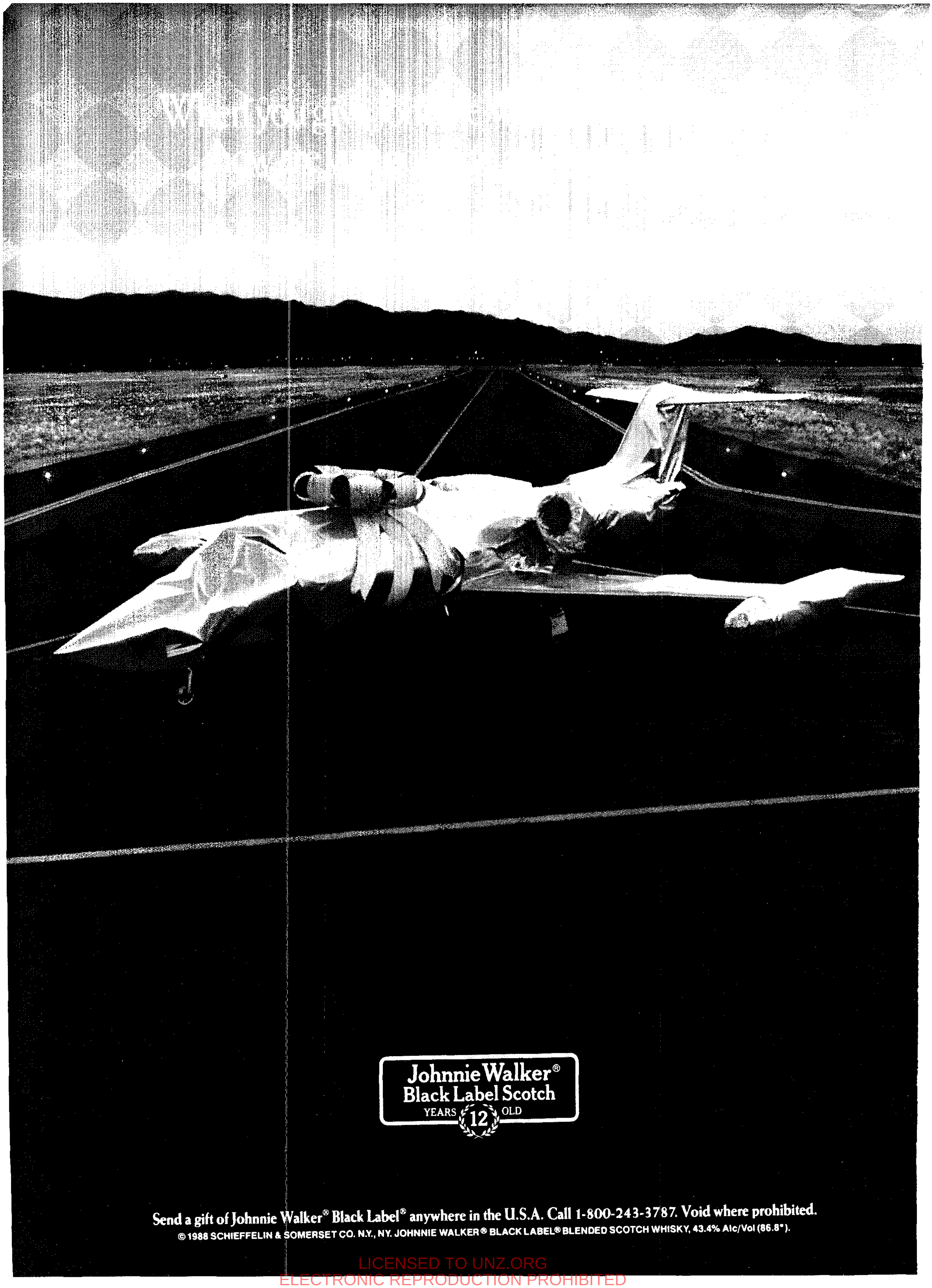

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MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

and "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" (1966; Mike Nichols), with Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, George Segal, and Sandy Dennis.

Dec. 18: "Christmas in Connecticut" (1945; Peter Godfrey), with Dennis Morgan, Barbara Stanwyck, and Sydney Greenstreet; and "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946; Frank Capra), with James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, Gloria Grahame, Thomas Mitchell, and Henry Travers.

From Dec. 19: Theatre temporarily closed.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)

THEATRE 1: Dec. 12 at 2:30: "Machine Dreams" (1988; directed by Peter Krieg), a documentary. . . . ¶ Dec. 12 at 6: "Line 1" (1987; Reinhard Hauff; in German, with English subtitles), with Ilona Schulz. . . . ¶ Dec. 13 at 2:30: "Dolly, Lotte and Maria" (1988; Rosa von Praunheim), a documentary. . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 2:30: "Line 1." . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 6: "The Microscope" (1987; Rudolf Thome; in German, with English subtitles), with Vladimir Weigl. . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 2:30: "Furrows" (1951; José Antonio Nieves Conde; in Spanish, with English subtitles), with Jose Prada. . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 6: "Maravillas" (1980; Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón; in Spanish, with English subtitles), with Fernando Fernán Gómez. Mr. Gutiérrez Aragón will be present. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 2: "Land Without Bread" (1933; Luis Buñuel; with an English narration); and "Paloma Fair" (1935; Benito Perojo; in Spanish, with English subtitles), with Charito Leonis. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 5: "Speak, Silent One" (1973; Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón; in Spanish, with English subtitles), with Jose Luis Lopez. Mr. Gutiérrez Aragón will be present. . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 2: "Maravillas." . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 5: "Nine Letters to Berta" (1965; Basilio Patino; in Spanish, with English subtitles), with Emilio Gutiérrez Caba. . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 2:30: "Speak, Silent One." . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 6: "Land Without Bread" and "Paloma Fair." . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 2:30: "Nine Letters to Berta." . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 6: "Life in Shadows" (1947; Lorenzo Llobet Grácia; in Spanish, with English subtitles), with Fernando Fernán Gómez.

THEATRE 2: Dec. 13 at 2:30: "Fanfan la Tulipe: Episode 1" (1925; René Leprince; a French silent film, with English voice-over translations of the French intertitles), with Aimé Simon-Girard. . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 3: "So This Is Paris" (1928; Ernst Lubitsch; a silent film), with Patsy Ruth Miller and Monte Blue. . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 6: "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" (1923; Wallace Worsley; a silent film), with Patsy Ruth Miller and Lon Chaney. Miss Miller will be present. . . . ¶ Dec. 19-20 at 6:30: A two-part program of silent and sound films by James Herbert, who will be present for both evenings.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 36th St. at 35th Ave., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)

RIKLIS THEATRE: A program of films with Biblical themes. Dec. 14 at 2:30: "Samson and Delilah" (1949; Cecil B. De Mille), with Hedy Lamarr and Victor Mature. . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 2:30: "Esther and the King" (1960; Raoul Walsh), with Joan Collins and Richard Egan. . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 2:30: "King of Kings" (1961; Nicholas Ray), with Jeffrey Hunter. . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 7:30: "Salome" (1953; William Dieterle), with Rita Hayworth, Charles Laughton, and Stewart Granger. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 12:30: "The Silver Chalice" (1954; Victor Saville), with Paul Newman, Virginia Mayo, Pier Angeli, and Jack Palance. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 3:30: "The Big Fisherman" (1959; Frank Borzage), with Howard Keel. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 7:30: "The Bible" (1966; John Huston), with George C. Scott, Ava Gardner, Peter O'Toole, and Richard Harris. . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 2: "The Greatest Story Ever Told" (1965; George Stevens), with Max Von Sydow. . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 2:30: "The Silver Chalice."

WARNER COMMUNICATIONS SCREENING ROOM (Wednesdays through Sundays, continuous showings): The first two of six programs of video art, television commercials, and short films dealing with feminist issues.

Anthology Film Archives, 32-34 Second Ave., at Second St. (477-2714)—Films showing in either the **JONAS MEKAS THEATRE** or the **MAYA DEREN THEATRE:** Dec. 12 at 7: "Pull My Daisy" (1959; Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie) and "The Sin of Jesus" (1961; Robert Frank). . . . ¶ Dec. 12 at 8:30: "Dream Street" (1921; D. W. Griffith; a silent film). . . . ¶ Dec. 13 at 7: "Me and My Brother" (1965-68; Robert Frank). . . . ¶ Dec. 13 at 9: "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" (1921; Rex Ingram; a silent film). . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 8: "Home Is Where the Heart Is" (1971; Danny Seymour; photographed by Robert Frank), "About Us" (1972; Robert Frank and Visual Studies Workshop students, Rochester), and "Keep Busy" (1975; Robert Frank). . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 8:30: A program of films by Su Friedrich. . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 10: "Variety" (1984; Bette Gordon). . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 7: "Chappaqua" (1967; Conrad Rooks; photographed by Robert Frank). . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 8: "The Ties That Bind" (1984) and "Damned If You Don't" (1987), both by Su Friedrich. . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 9: "Nanook of the North" (1922; Robert Flaherty; a silent film). . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 6: "The Pilgrim" (1922; a silent film) and "Pay Day" (1922; a silent film), both by Charlie Chaplin. . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 8 and 10: "Cocksucker Blues" (1972; Robert Frank). . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 8:30: A repeat program of films by Su Friedrich. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 6: "Une Femme Douce" (1969; Robert Bresson; in French, with no English subtitles). . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 7: "The Ties That Bind" and "Damned If You Don't." . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 8 and 10: "Cocksucker Blues." . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 9: "Morning" (1968), "Wait" (1968), "Reverberation" (1969), Transparency" (1969), and "Field" (1970), all by Ernie Gehr. . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 6: "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" (1964; Sergei Paradjanov). . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 8: "Life Dances On" (1980; Robert Frank), "Energy and How to Get It" (1981; Robert Frank, Rudy Wurlitzer, and Gary Hill), and "This Song for Jack" (1983; Robert Frank). . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 8:30: "History" (1970), "Field: Short Version" (1970), and "Serene Velocity" (1970), all by Ernie Gehr. . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 7: "Orphans of the Storm" (1922; D. W. Griffith; a silent film). . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 8: "Life Raft Earth" (1969; Robert Frank and Rudy Wurlitzer), "Conversations in Vermont" (1969; Robert Frank), and "About Me: A Musical" (1971; Robert Frank). . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 7: "Home Is Where the Heart Is," "About Us," and "Keep Busy." . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 8:30: "Scenes from Under Childhood" (1969-70; Stan Brakhage). . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 6: "Foolish Wives" (1922; Erich von Stroheim; a silent film). . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 7: A program of films by Stan Brakhage. . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 8:30: "O.K. End Here" (1963; Robert Frank), "Home Improvement" (1985; Robert Frank), and "Fire in the East: A Portrait of Robert Frank" (1986; Philip Brookman and Amy Brookman).

Collective for Living Cinema, 41 White St. (925-2111)—Dec. 12-13 at 7: "Landlord Blues" (1987; Jacob Burckhardt). . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 7: "The Red Tapes" (1976; Vito Acconci), a video work. . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 7: "The World of Photography" (1976; William Wegman and Michael Smith) and "The Loner" (1980; Tony Oursler), both videos. . . . ¶ Dec. 16-18 at 8 and Dec. 19-22 at 7: "My Friend Ivan Lapshin" (1984; Alexei Gherman; in Russian, with English subtitles).

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (752-3015)—Dec. 16 at 6:30: "Rashomon" (1950; Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese, with English subtitles), with Machiko Kyo, Toshiro Mifune, Takashi Shimura, and Masayuki Mori. . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 8:30: "Street of Shame" (1956; Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese, with English subtitles), with Machiko Kyo.

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(Unsigned notes are by Pauline Kael; others are by Terrence Rafferty.)

Another Woman—Woody Allen's (unofficial) version of Ingmar Bergman's "Wild Strawberries" features Gena Rowlands as a firm-minded, judgmental philosophy professor who has just turned fifty. Having taken a year off to write a book, she has rented a workplace, but "reality" leaks through: the voices of an analyst's patients come through an air vent, and she becomes obsessed with the voice of a distraught pregnant woman (Mia Farrow), whose confused feelings awaken her to the risk-taking she has put out of her own fearful, prudent life. She realizes she has missed out on passion, on motherhood, on everything that matters. The picture is meant to be about emotion, but it has no emotion. It's smooth and high-toned; it's polished in its nothingness. The only resonance comes from a few of the performers—especially from Gene Hackman, who comes through with some sexual magnetism, and Sandy Dennis, who lets loose with bursts of smudgy, chaotic anger. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/31/88.) (Paris.)

Bagdad Café—After an argument with her husband on a godforsaken stretch of highway at the edge of the Mojave Desert, a fat German tourist named Jasmin (Marianne Sägebrecht) checks into a crummy motel attached to the equally crummy Bagdad Café. This movie, the first in English by the German director Percy Adlon (whose 1985 "Sugarbaby" was also a vehicle for Sägebrecht), is filled with eccentrics who are apparently meant to be lovable. The rather precious conceit of the film is that Jasmin somehow brings the outcast characters together in a kind of extended family; by the end, the Bagdad Café has been transformed into a popular roadside cabaret, with everyone contributing a specialty (Jasmin does magic tricks). The American performers are trapped in a movie that treats them as merely exotic—waxwork grotesques waiting to be animated by a mysterious German touch.—T.R. (Quad Cinema.)

Das Boot (1980; "The Boat")—If you want to experience the tedium of life in a German submarine, this is the movie that will give it to you—you're trapped for two and a half hours in a Second World War U-boat, with men who have the same kind of anti-war nobility that the men had in American submarine epics of the fifties. About ten minutes in, you may feel that you've already seen this picture. It even has the same kind of heroic man-of-few-words-but-strong-deep-feelings captain (Jurgen Prochnow). The director, Wolfgang Petersen, did the adaptation of the best-selling autobiographical novel by Lothar-Günther Buchheim, a former war correspondent. In German. (Cinema Village; Dec. 18.)

Cover Girl (1944)—The wartime plot about hoofers and models is a shambles, but this big, flashy, Technicolor musical has a lot to recommend it: Rita Hayworth, Gene Kelly, Phil Silvers, and songs by Ira Gershwin and Jerome Kern. Hayworth looks sumptuous, and her big smile could be the emblem of the period. The cast includes Lee Bowman, Otto Kruger, Eve Arden, Edward Brophy, Jinx Falkenburg, and dozens of celebrated models. Charles Vidor directed; Virginia Van Upp wrote the script. (Biograph Cinema; Dec. 16-17.)

A Cry in the Dark—The director, Fred Schepisi, attempts an epic dissection of how superstitions can spread, and how false the public perception (based on the media) can be. He uses the case of Lindy Chamberlain (Meryl Streep), the wife of a Seventh Day Adventist minister, who was tried for murder and convicted, to ask why Australians cynically rejected her account of seeing a dingo (the Australian wild dog) slink off from the tent her nine-week-old daughter was in. Perhaps the thing that made her the most hated woman in Australia was that TV had accustomed people to grieving mothers who showed their frailty and their naked pathos, and here was Lindy on TV—stoic, matter-of-fact, and bluntly impatient at the endless dumb ques-

IN BRIEF—Cont'd

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tions. (From time to time, Streep suggests the strong emotions that Lindy hides in public, and we feel a bond with her—we feel joined to her privacy.) The movie is never less than gripping, but Schepisi, who worked on the script with Robert Caswell (it's based on John Bryson's study of the case, "Evil Angels"), put together more elements than he could develop. Remarkable as Streep is (she does some of her finest screen acting), she seems to be playing a person in a documentary. This is also true of the accomplished Sam Neill, though he seems faultlessly right as Lindy's husband. You come out moved—even shaken—yet not quite certain what you've been watching. (11/28/88) (Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Metro Cinema; through Dec. 15, evenings only. . . . ¶ Coronet, and Art Greenwich Twin; through Dec. 20.)

Earth (1930)—The specific subject is collectivization, but Dovzhenko's masterwork is a passionate lyric on the continuity of man, death, and nature. The theme is perhaps most startlingly expressed in a sequence about a man who has just celebrated the arrival of a tractor. He starts to dance—for sheer love of life—on his way home, and as he dances in the middle of the moonlit road he is suddenly struck by a bullet. (In the fifties, it was voted one of the ten greatest films of all time by an international group of critics.) Silent. (Thalia SoHo; Dec. 18.)

Gorillas in the Mist—Sigourney Weaver as the anthropologist Dian Fossey, in what seems meant to be a triumphant epic about an activist heroine who made a difference. (A title at the close tells us that Fossey saved the mountain gorillas from extinction.) Weaver's physical strength alone is inspiring here, and there's a new freedom in her acting. She's so vivid that you immediately feel Fossey's will and drive. But Michael Apted, who directed, has an indeterminate approach to some of the key incidents; he doesn't locate a dramatic core in Anna Hamilton Phelan's script. The movie is a feminist version of "King Kong"—now it's the gorillas who do the screaming. (10/17/88) (23rd St. West Triplex; through Dec. 20, evenings only.)

High Spirits—A busload of American tourists arrive at a castle that's advertised as the most haunted place in Ireland. The producers may have been hoping for something on the order of National Lampoon's Irish Vacation with a jigger of "Ghostbusters;" they whacked away at the film, removing between fifteen and twenty-five per cent of the footage, but it's still clear that what the writer-director, Neil Jordan (best known for his 1986 "Mona Lisa"), was trying for was an Irish phantasmagoria—a "Midsummer Night's Dream," with love swaps and ghostly transformations. And once you get past the clumsily antic early scenes, the moody texture can take hold of your imagination. At its best, the film is a soft Irish kiss. There may never have been a movie ghost who was as sexy and ethereal a love object as Daryl Hannah is here, and as a rich, tough American, Beverly D'Angelo has her own walloping gorgeousness. Peter O'Toole is the owner of the castle; Liam Neeson is Hannah's ghostly bridegroom; Steve Guttenberg is a love-struck ninny. Also with Peter Gallagher, Jennifer Tilly, Liz Smith, Donal McCann, and Martin Ferrero. The cinematography is by Alex Thomson; the satisfyingly spooky special effects are by Meddings Magic Camera Company. (12/12/88) (Criterion Center.)

Lady Sings the Blues (1972)—The chemistry of pop vulgarization is all-powerful here; factually, this life of Billie Holiday is a fraud, but emotionally it delivers. That great, dizzy imp Diana Ross gives herself to the role with an all-out physicality that wins the audience over. Regrettably, she sings too much like Billie Holiday, and the songs blur one's memories. Sidney J. Furie directed. With Richard Pryor as Piano Man, and Billy Dee Williams. (Biograph Cinema; Dec. 15.)

The Last Temptation of Christ—Martin Scorsese's film is based on an intense, rather ponderous novel by Nikos Kazantzakis that portrays Christ as a tormented prophet who has to choose between his human nature and his divine nature—who in order to fulfill his role as redeemer must reject the overpowering temptation to be merely a man. If we respond to anything in this movie it's to the idea of Scorsese wrestling with Kazantzakis's conception, thrashing manfully among the tangles of the novel's dense prose, trying to isolate some clear, intelligible meaning from this religious fever-dream. Scorsese hasn't managed to come up with a consistent visual style for the story, and the movie's intensity, over a span of two hours and forty minutes, is sputtering, fitful. The scenes meant to evoke the natural—the human—side of the story don't have much charge, and most of the actors look uncomfortable. (The drab modern idiom of Paul Schrader's dialogue is at least part of the problem.) This movie isn't a sacrilege; it's just an honorable mistake. With Willem Dafoe as Jesus, Harvey Keitel as Judas, Barbara Hershey as Mary Magdalene, and David Bowie as Pontius Pilate. Peter Gabriel composed the music.—T.R. (9/5/88) (Cinema 3.)

Madame Sousatzka—As a flamboyant, grande-dame piano teacher of Russian lineage, Shirley MacLaine seems to have entered the Simone Signoret sweepstakes, but she doesn't project Signoret's generosity—she doesn't spill over emotionally. This is, arguably, MacLaine's worst performance. She has flurries of physical mannerisms, but she's tight and held in; she's a wacky witch with frizzy red hair; she could be Norma Desmond's small-town spinster sister. Sousatzka lives in London (in an Edwardian house that is to be demolished) and devotes her energies and her hopes to the most prodigious of her students, a fifteen-year-old Indian boy raised in England—a role played with intelligence and poise by Navin Chowdhry. The blindingly derivative movie is about the boy's breaking free of her, though he knows he'll remain in her debt forever. Directed by John Schlesinger, this is a handsomely mounted production, and the musical community may regard it as a treasure—as the "Red Shoes" of the keyboard. (10/31/88) (Waverly. . . . ¶ Carnegie Hall Cinema; through Dec. 13. . . . ¶ Plaza; starting Dec. 14.)

Matador—Hugely entertaining. Everything is eroticized in this lush, clownish comedy by Pedro Almodóvar. The characters act out their wildest fantasies—or, like the handsome, wealthy young virgin Ángel (Antonio Banderas), try to act them out—and embarrass themselves. Ángel is training to be a bullfighter, but he faints at the sight of blood. He's such a supreme fantasist that he hallucinates and sees what happened in a recent series of murders—unluckily, he's fantasist enough to think that he committed them. It's all sumptuously sick and funny. Assumpta Serna plays a culmination of the scarlet-woman tradition of Joan Crawford, Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner, and Anouk Aimée—all those flaming man-killers with their too vibrant smiles. And Almodóvar himself appears as a mad-genius couturier who messes up his curly hair before he appears in public. Also with Nacho Martínez, Eusebio Poncela, Carmen Maura, Eva Cobo, Julieta Serrano, and Chus Lampreave. Written by the director and Jesús Ferrero; cinematography by Ángel Luis Fernández. In Spanish. (5/16/88) (Quad Cinema.)

Mother (1926)—Frequently selected by critics as one of the greatest films of all time. Pudovkin's masterpiece, based on Maxim Gorky's novel, which is set during the 1905 revolution, is not overtly political; it gives an epic sense of that revolution through the emotions of the participants, and sweeps one along by its fervor and a brilliant and varied use of the medium. Vera Baranovskaya plays the mother who is tricked by the police into betraying her son (Nikolai Batalov). Pudovkin (unusual among the great Russian directors for his interest in acting) himself plays the officer who interrogates her. Silent. (Thalia SoHo; Dec. 18.)

Mystic Pizza—The romantic adventures of three young women who work in a pizza parlor in Mystic, Connecticut: Jojo (Lili Taylor) is small and lively; Daisy (Julia Roberts) is tall and sexy; Kat (Annabeth Gish) is serious-minded, bound for Yale. They laugh; they cry; they bond. The movie, directed by Donald Petrie, has an earnest, self-congratulatory little-movie tone, but it's as predictable as if it had been mass-produced—just another thin, reheated slice of life. Also with Vincent Phillip D'Onofrio, William R. Moses, Adam Storke, and Conchata Ferrell.—T.R. (Quad Cinema. . . . ¶ Eastside Cinema; through Dec. 13.)

Network (1976)—Television, Paddy Chayefsky says, is turning us into morons and humanoids; people have lost the ability to love. Who has—him? Oh, no, the blacks, the revolutionaries, and a power-hungry executive at the fictional UBS network named Diana Christensen (Faye Dunaway). The cast of this messianic farce includes William Holden, Peter Finch, Robert Duvall, Beatrice Straight, and Ned Beatty, and they all take turns yelling at us soulless masses. Sidney Lumet directed. (Thalia SoHo; Dec. 16-17.)

Scrooged—Bill Murray, in a striking, outsize entertainment based on Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." Murray's Frank Cross, who's the youngest network president in history, is the meanest man in television. (That's the same as meanest man in the world.) The performance is a triumphant parody of yuppie callousness. And it's much more: Murray's freewheeling, screwy generosity is what makes the huge contraption of a movie work. With production design by J. Michael Riva and cinematography by Michael Chapman, this satirical extravaganza is set in a stylized, made-up universe with deep blues and black backgrounds—suave and velvety. The heartlessness of the film's beauty is exciting: you're looking at life in an executive's dark mirror. And the picture keeps popping surprises: David Johansen (also known as the lounge singer Buster Poindexter) is the grinning cabbie whose identification card reads "Ghost of Christmas Past." John Glover, who sports a collegiate "Tennis, anyone?" haircut, is the new executive who's bucking to replace Frank. Carol Kane, as the Ghost of Christmas Present, is a weirdly dainty Sugar Plum witch. Also with Robert Mitchum, John Forsythe, Alfre Woodard, Michael J. Pollard, Karen Allen, and many other famous performers. Directed by Richard Donner; the script is credited to Mitch Glazer and Michael O'Donoghue. (Elaine May and others also worked on it.) (12/12/88) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Loews Orpheum, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Loews Astor Plaza.)

The Thin Blue Line—Errol Morris's trancelike, almost lyrical documentary tells the story of a 1976 cop-killing in Dallas and examines the process by which a man who is almost certainly innocent was convicted and sentenced to death for the crime. The movie's form is circular, spiralling, its obsessive, repetitive visual motifs echoed in Philip Glass's hauntingly monotonous score. In showing us the lies, the fears, the social pressures, the ulterior motives, the stubbornness, and the plain confusion that combined to produce the case against the unfortunate Randall Adams—

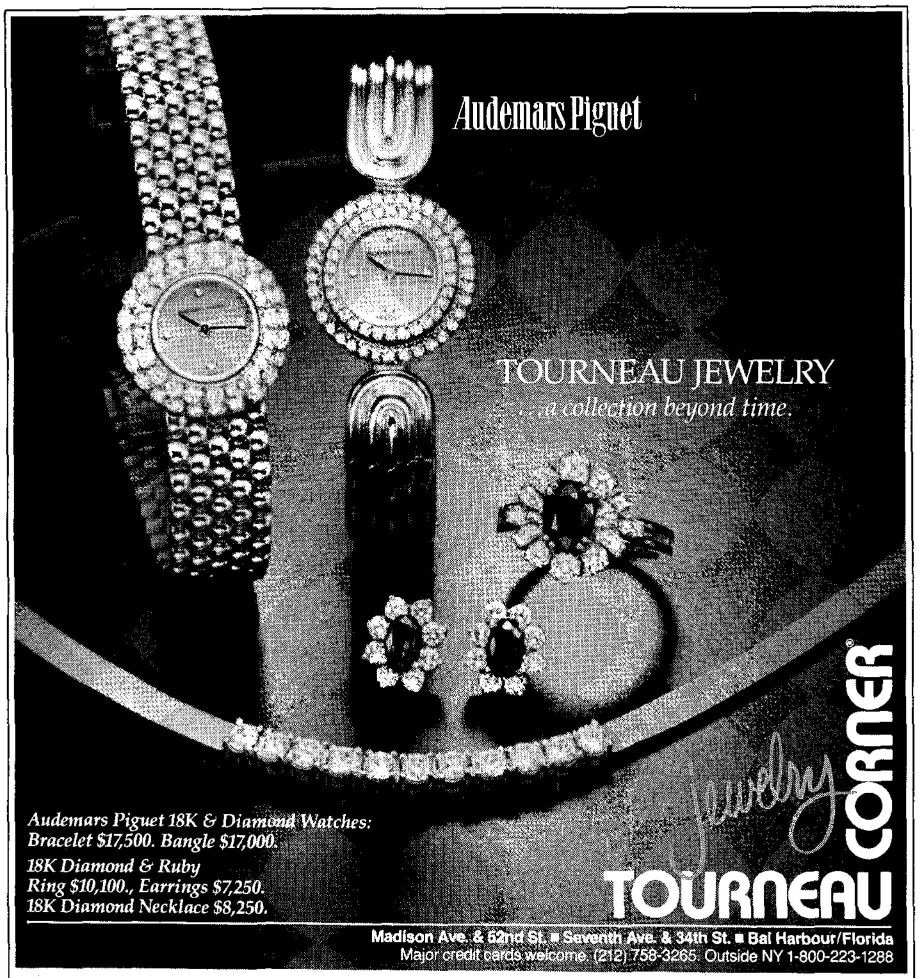
whose fate is worthy of a Borges hero—Morris seems to be investigating not just this squalid murder but the very nature of untruth. His style is occasionally too fancy and elliptical for absolute clarity, but this is a powerful and thrillingly strange movie. Morris—who actually uncovered new evidence in the course of making the film—has turned Randall Adams' case into a kind of tabloid poetry, a meditation on uncertainty and the fascination of violence.—T.R. (9/5/88) (Lincoln Plaza; through Dec. 20.)

Things Change—A modernist version of a sentimental fable: David Mamet, who directed and was the co-writer (with Shel Silverstein), gives you the blueprint but not the feeling. The story is essentially a heart-warmer: Sicilian-born Gino (Don Ameche), a dignified old Chicago shoeshine man who gets mixed up with mobsters and is mistaken for a Mafia don, emerges unscathed because of his simple goodness—his humanity. The one most affected by it is the blundering mafioso Jerry (Joe Mantegna); there's nothing to look at except Gino and Jerry's mummified skits, which are directed at a deliberate and unvarying pace. The result is like a Frank Capra–Damon Runyon comic fairy tale of the thirties in slow motion. With Robert Prosky and W. H. Macy. (11/14/88) (57th St. Playhouse. . . . ¶ Gramercy. Evenings only.)

Wings of Desire ("Der Himmel über Berlin")—The director, Wim Wenders, who wrote the script with the collaboration of Peter Handke, has a theme: in an approximation of Rilke's words, "Joy has gone astray." We're told that "when the child was a child" stories held together. Now all we have is fragmentation, entropy. Two angels—Damiel (Bruno Ganz) and Cassiel (Otto Sander)—hover over the bleak, divided city and move among the forlorn Berliners, listening to what's in their minds: listening to the questions about existence that these people ask themselves. Our overhearing what the angels hear—the thoughts chanted on the track, all in even, quiet tones, as grayed out as the sunless skies—works on us like a tranquillizer. Eventually, Damiel falls in love with a beautiful French aerialist (Solveig Dommartin), and gives up his wings. With Peter Falk, who brings some funky warmth to the role of an American movie star, and Curt Bois as a sad-faced old man called Homer. The cinematography (tinted black-and-white, and color) is by Henri Alekan. This Franco-German production is in English, French, and German. (5/30/88) (Bleecker St. Cinema.)

The Wiz (1978)—With Diana Ross in the lead, Dorothy is now a shy schoolteacher in Harlem, and Diana Ross's shy is like Sergeant Bilko's modest. Fervently wet-eyed, she sings songs of preachy uplift in relentlessly slow arrangements. Nipsey Russell (as the Tinman) is able to ride right over the film's muddy carelessness, and a sweetness comes through the Pagliacci makeup that Michael Jackson wears as the Scarecrow, and Mable King, who plays the Wicked Witch, has a hot growly song. But this film brings out all the weaknesses of its director, Sidney Lumet, and none of his strengths. The whole production has a stagnant atmosphere, and the big dance numbers are free-form traffic jams. Charlie Small's score for the Broadway show has been padded out with some new music, and adapted by Quincy Jones; the maladroit script is by Joel Schumacher. With Lena Horne, Richard Pryor, and Ted Ross. (Biograph Cinema; Dec. 15.)

Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown—The most original pop writer-director of the eighties, Pedro Almodóvar is Godard with a human face—a happy face. The artificial is what sends him sky high, and the Madrid of this film is (as the closing song has it) "Puro Teatro." This is a movie where after a while you can't tell sexy from funny. Pepa (Carmen Maura), an actress who works in TV and commercials, turns on her answering machine and learns that she has been jilted. Infuriated, she dashes around, on spike heels, in a short, tight skirt, trying to confront her long-time live-in lover, the elegant, vain Iván (Fernando Guillén). The women of the title include Iván's early lover (Julieta Serrano), his new lover (Kiti Manver), and two (Rossy De Palma and María Barranco) who are involved with his son (Antonio Banderas). Sleek-legged and chic, they run the theatrical gamut. Cinematography by José Luis Alcaine. In Spanish. (11/14/88) (Cinema Studio.)



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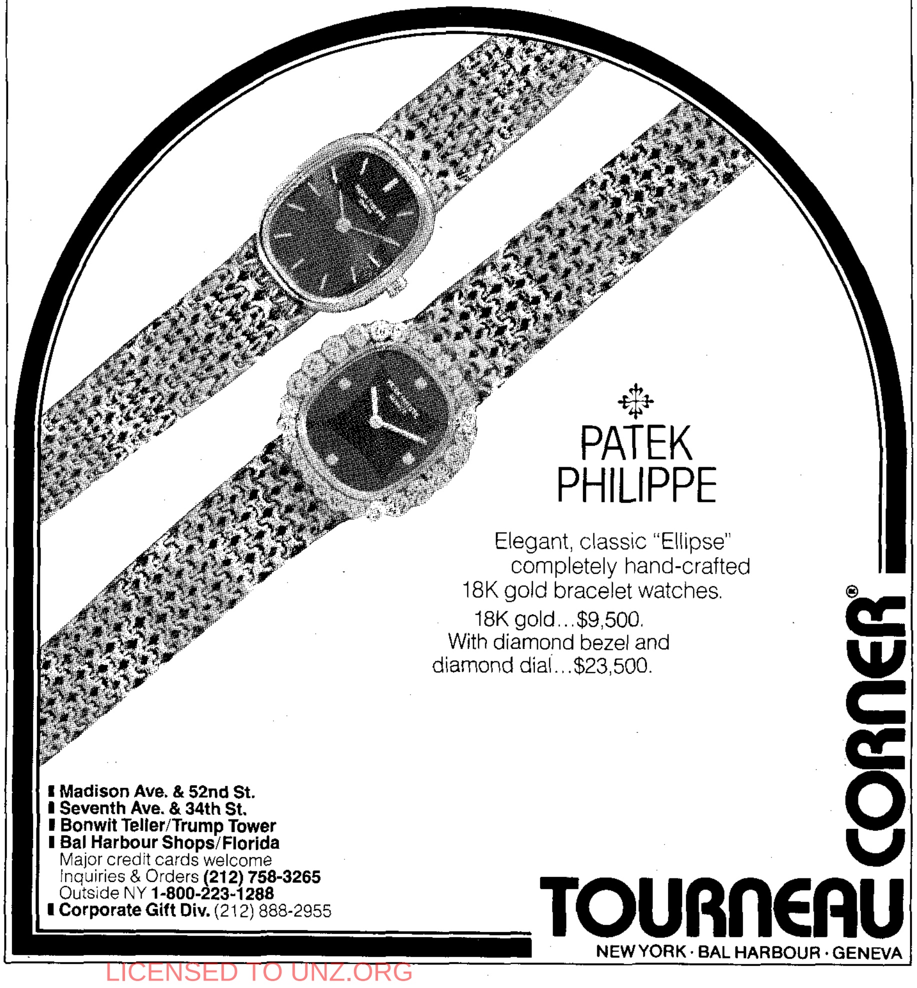

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THE
NEW YORKER

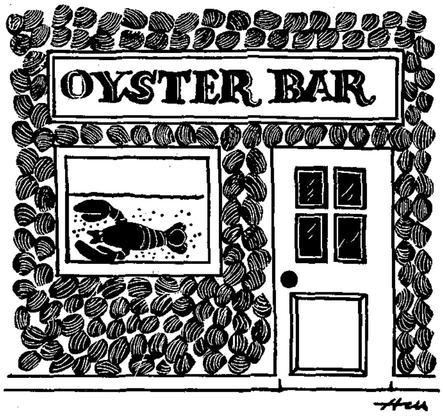
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

THE New York State Lottery was created, twenty-two years ago, with the dual purpose of luring clientele away from the traditional numbers game (on the if-you-can't-beat-'em-join-'em theory of law enforcement) and providing a new source of funds for public education. It has accomplished all that and then some. The lottery has gradually evolved from one form of betting to five: the Daily Numbers, Win-4, Instant Games, Keno, and Lotto, the last of which frequently generates jackpots in the tens of millions of dollars. "Lotto fever hit the boiling point yesterday," the *Post* reported a week ago Friday, after a record-setting spurt of betting had driven the prize money up from twenty-six million dollars to forty million. The local papers all sent correspondents out into the betting hordes, and they returned with stories about a retired electrician from Short Hills, New Jersey, who had taken the PATH train into Manhattan in order to buy a Lotto ticket ("I don't like the Jersey game," he explained), a secretary whose duties regularly included waiting in the Lotto line on behalf of her boss, a college student who had decided to forgo his biology exam, and other determined participants. By Saturday morning, the payoff had reached forty-five million dollars—the biggest sum of money that New Yorkers had ever been offered in a game of chance—and lottery officials estimated that nearly eighty per cent of the adult inhabitants of New York State had bought at least one ticket. (The turnout of adult New Yorkers in this year's Presidential election was less than fifty per cent.)

The people who ran the old numbers game, being outlaws, were not in a position to use the mass media as a marketing tool. The state is, and with the passage of time it has become more and more resourceful in calling attention not only to the lottery's existence but to the kind of life-style changes that a winning ticket could facilitate. This summer and fall, for example, it has been all but impossible to turn on a radio or TV set, ride a bus or subway, or read a newspaper without encountering man-on-the-street-style ads in which New Yorkers set forth their Lotto-victory plans. "I'd buy a place in the country. The country of Spain," says one hopeful bettor. "I'd have a Mercedes out front and the Atlantic out back," says another. "I'd pay someone to follow my husband around the house and pick up after him," says a third.

News coverage of the lottery has been equally generous, and equally filled with anecdotes about how aspiring and actual winners intend to spend their fortunes. The day before the forty-five-million-dollar drawing, the *Post* went as far as to compile its own list of appropriate purchases, which included a California winery; a Park Avenue duplex penthouse (with five working fireplaces); and a Rolls-Royce Corniche II convertible. In a companion article the *Post* mentioned the long odds that attend every dollar spent on a Lotto ticket—in this case, twelve million nine hundred thousand to one against winning even a share of the jackpot. But that was the extent of the discussion of a possible downside. (Lottery stories rarely try to translate the odds into more accessible terms. An exception was an article in *Harper's* a few years ago; the author, Curt Suplee, calculated that a person was about seven times as likely to be killed by lightning as to win a million dollars in an instant-lottery game.)



The Lotto campaign's success in generating unpaid media coverage, and in maintaining such consistency of tone between paid and unpaid, must have aroused envy throughout the advertising world. It must also have stirred envious longings among the people who run the public-transportation system of this city. For several years now, they have been trying to shake off the damage that decades of undermaintenance did to the reputation (as well as the reality) of the city's subways and buses. The New York City Transit Authority recently launched a series of advertisements promising "the greatest number of service improvements since 1904." But even in the subway and bus systems themselves the T.A.'s ads have been forced to compete with far more numerous ads in which Lotto players express a longing to escape from public transportation. "I'd try island-hopping instead of strap-hanging," says the male star of one ad. "Instead of waiting for a bus, I'd have a limo waiting for me," says the female star of another—a large ad that has been strategically placed on the walls of bus shelters throughout the city.

We can think of one more class of public employees with reason to wonder at the scale and the success of the lottery's promotional efforts: schoolteachers. The cause of public education receives roughly forty-five per cent of the income generated by the lottery—a total, up to now, of approximately four and a half billion dollars. But the note of desperation that sounds in almost every assessment of New York's schools is no less painful now than it was before the lottery money began pouring in. To a teacher, engaged in the daily struggle to persuade children of the value of good work habits and long-term thinking, the spectacle of a vast public-relations program in which an agency of the state pokes fun at the responsibilities of workaday life and holds out the prospect of a sudden and effortless ascent into the socioeconomic stratosphere—well, it must seem extremely odd. But the dilemma it poses should be familiar. Teachers are used to competing for the attention of the young against powerful and sometimes deceptively attractive social forces. The schools already offer drug education and sex education. Maybe the time has come for a little lottery education.

• •

Wobbly

THE spirit of Joe Hill, the legendary labor activist and songwriter who was executed by a Utah firing squad in 1915, visited the nation's capital the week before Thanksgiving. The occasion was the unexpected reappearance, after some forty years spent stuffed in a drawer at the National Archives, of the last traces of Hill's earthly remains. In a simple ceremony, custody of Hill's ashes was formally transferred to Frederic Lee, the chairman of the general executive board of the Industrial Workers of the World, which is the militant workers' organization that Hill belonged to, and to whose "Little Red Song Book" he contributed countless bitter parodies. Also representing the I.W.W., or Wobblies, at the event was Bruce (Utah) Phillips, a travelling folksinger, storyteller, and organizer who spent years studying Hill while working as an archivist in Utah. A bluff, hearty man with a white beard and ponytail, Phillips cheerfully filled us in on the story of Joe Hill's life, death, and resurrection.

"Joe was born Joel Hagglung in Gävle, Sweden, in 1879, and changed his name after arriving in this country, in 1902," Mr. Phillips told us. "He had learned English on steamers over there, so he came here with a heavy accent but a good command of the language, and he had an amazing ear for the American idiom. We don't know exactly how he got involved with the Wobblies, but as he travelled across the country, working day jobs and agitating in one workers' struggle or another, he would send letters and occasionally songs to the I.W.W. headquarters in Chicago, and they'd be printed in the Wobbly newspaper."

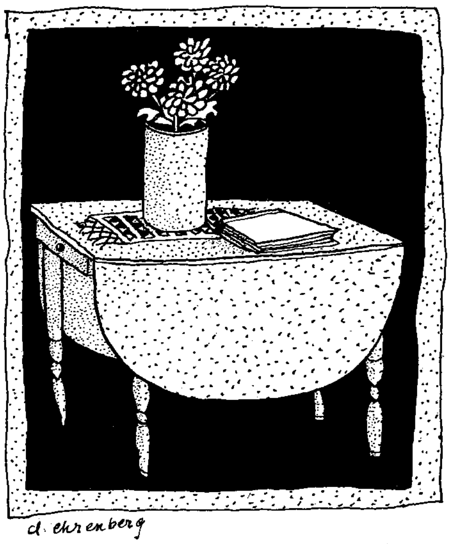
We were surprised to see that Hill's remains amounted to so little: a white plastic vial the size of a small jar of cold cream accommodated them. The bulk of his ashes, it turned out, had been scattered to the winds by fellow-Wobblies shortly after his death, in accordance with the wish expressed in their martyred comrade's last written work, a rhymed will:

My will is easy to decide,
For there is nothing to divide.
My kin don't need to fuss or moan.
"Moss does not cling to a rolling
stone."

My body? Ah! If I could choose,
I would to ashes it reduce,
And let the merry breezes blow
My dust to where some flowers grow.

Perhaps some fading flower then
Would come to life and bloom again.
This is my last and final will.
Good luck to all of you.
Joe Hill

This will, Mr. Phillips told us, was inscribed on the backs of packets containing some of Hill's ashes which were sent to sympathizers all over the world. On the front of each packet was a photo of Hill, captioned "Joe Hill, Murdered by the Capitalist Class, November 19, 1915. Industrial Workers of the World. We Never Forget."



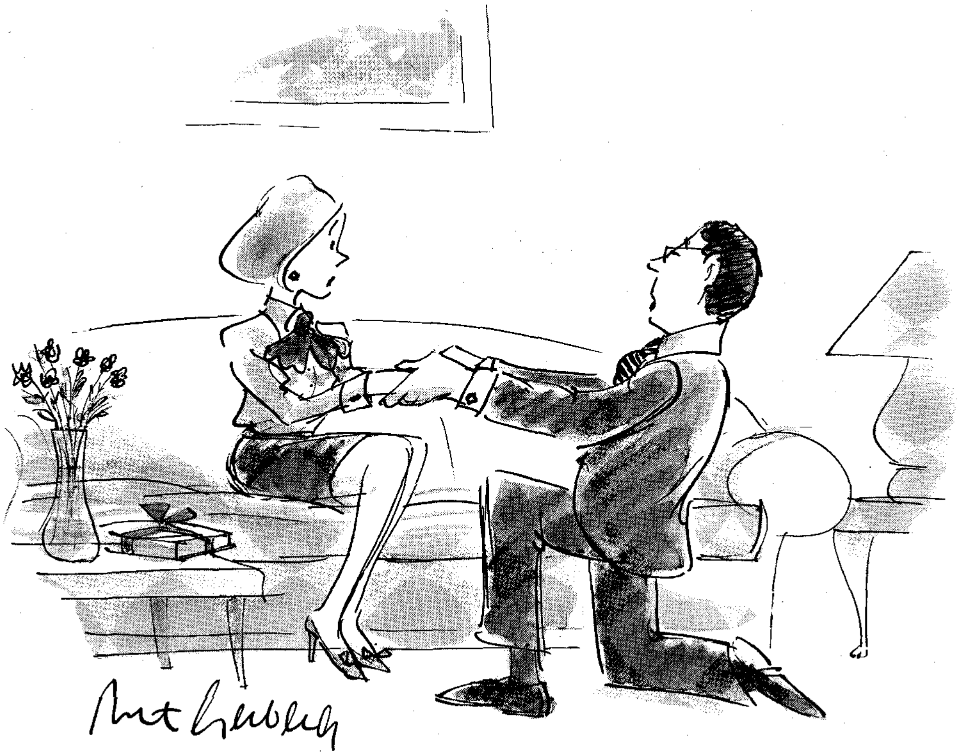
"Two years after Joe's death, one of these packets was mailed from the I.W.W.'s headquarters, in Chicago, to Charles Gepford, a Wobbly there, apparently to keep it from being confiscated during a Justice Department raid," Mr. Phillips said. "But the packet was intercepted by the Post Office, and the Bureau of Investigation in Washington was alerted. The Espionage Act had been passed earlier that year, so postmasters all over the country were sending in materials—periodicals, postcards, letters—that they thought were subversive."

In 1944, the Post Office records relating to the Espionage Act were taken over by the Archives, and eventually people there got around to sorting through them and discovered Joe Hill's ashes. In the spring of 1986, the Archives mentioned the ashes in a published list of some of the more unusual artifacts in its possession, the Potomac Labor History Society took note and alerted members of the United Auto Workers, and before long the information was printed in the U.A.W.'s magazine, *Solidarity*. Soon afterward, Mr. Lee got in touch with the Archives about recovering the ashes, and, following a legal ruling that the ashes were not in fact a federal record, arrangements were made for their release. The packet itself, on the other hand, remains at the Archives.

The ceremony took only thirty seconds that morning, Mr. Phillips told us. "We went upstairs, the woman from the Archives gave Fred a piece of paper to sign, he signed it, and she handed us the ashes." And now, as far as Mr. Phillips was concerned, it was time to put the matter to rest. "I've had my fill of heroes," he said. "How many times have people's movements put their energy into building up a charismatic leader only to see him get knocked off or bought off? Joe felt the same way. You know what he said in his last letter from prison, don't you? He said, 'Don't mourn. Organize.' "

Mural

TO celebrate the centenary of the birth or death of a great man is a commonplace, but to celebrate the centenary of the painting of a great picture is surely a rare event; indeed, we suspect that it may have happened for the first time a few Sundays ago, when the vast mural by John La Farge that fills most of the wall of the chancel of the Church of the Ascension received a centennial salute. The mural has just been restored, as part of a renovation of the church as a whole which is being conducted under the watchful eye of its rector, the Reverend Donald Goodness. Ascension, on the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and Tenth Street, was designed in 1840 by Richard Upjohn, the premier ecclesiastical architect of the day and a champion of the then newly fashionable Gothic Revival style. The first church to be built on Fifth Avenue, it was constructed of random ashlar brownstone, which gave it a sombre mien appropriate for the wealthy upper-class Episcopalians who were expected to worship there. By 1884, though, the congregation had grown dissatisfied with mere sombreness, especially in the interior of the church. Stanford White, who, at the age of thirty-one, was already the most sought-after architect in the city, was called upon to suggest improvements. He enlisted three close friends—the painter John La Farge, the mosaicist Maitland Armstrong, and the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens—to join him in enriching the chancel. They decided to seal off a row of narrow lancet windows along the wall of the chancel and erect a new altar and a reredos with mosaics by Armstrong and bas-reliefs by Saint-Gaudens. Above the reredos, in a proscenium-like gilded setting designed by White, would be placed a mural painting by La Farge of the Ascension of Christ.



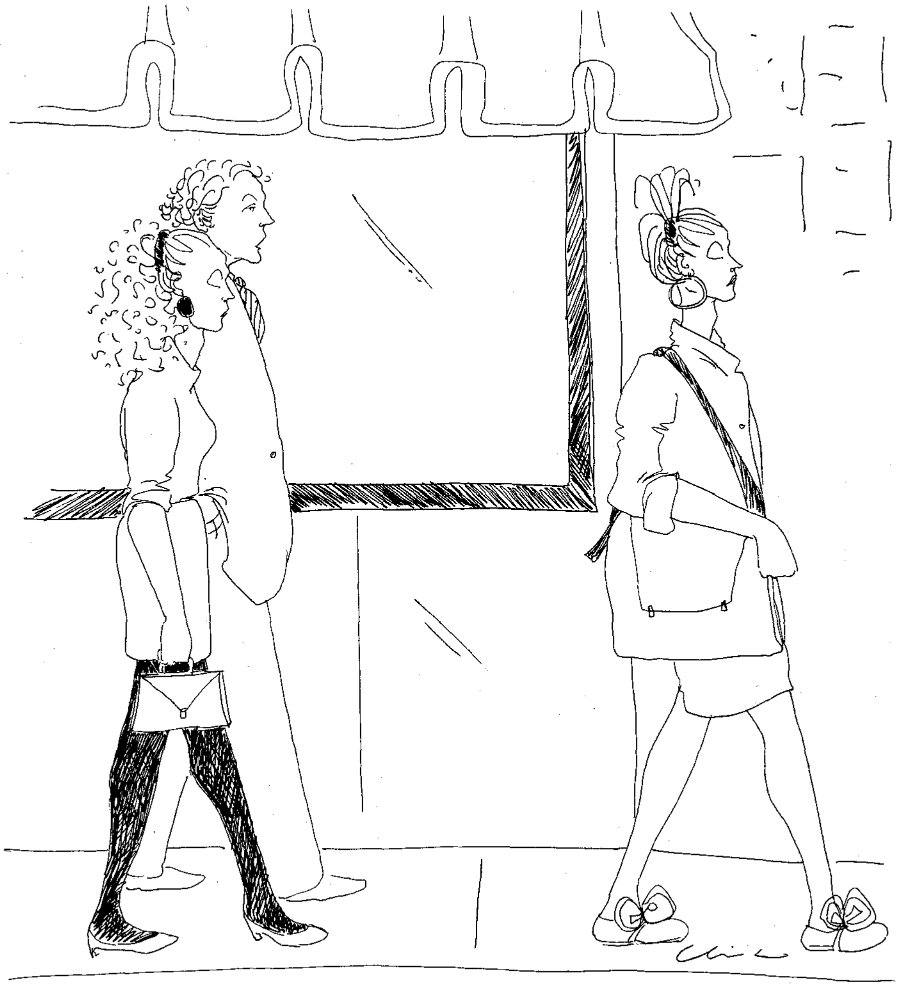
"Sorry, Wendy, but a simple 'yes' is not good enough. I want a mandate."

The slow pace at which La Farge worked was legendary, but in this instance he was justified in taking a long time; the painting is approximately thirty-five feet high and thirty-five feet wide, and, even with the help of several assistants, he didn't complete it until 1888. The work borrowed from several well-known Renaissance precedents; for example, the figure of the ascending Christ was inspired by Raphael's "Transfiguration," and the grouping of the apostles looking up in wonder came from Palma Vecchio's "Assumption of the Virgin." The landscape in the background was contemporary; in the course of a journey to Japan with his friend Henry Adams in the spring of 1886, La Farge had seen (as he wrote at the time) "a space of mountains and cloud and flat land which seemed to me to be what was needed," so into the painting went that fugitive glimpse of Japan.

"The Ascension" was the only mural painting that La Farge ever painted in situ—he had a big studio farther west on Tenth Street, where he usually worked—and he may have quickly regretted his decision to do so. No sooner had his assistants glued the canvas (actually, three large pieces of canvas stitched together) to the newly plastered wall of the chancel than the wall began to give way; the weight of the canvas was too much for it. White was hastily summoned, the wall was rebuilt, and in the summer of 1887 La Farge set to work. At the unveiling, a year and a half later, the painting received high praise. Over the decades, it suffered no problems beyond those of slowly accumulating a considerable amount of grime and undergoing a couple of ill-advised partial restorations.

The recent restoration of the painting was the handiwork of Holly Hotchner, the chief conservator of the New-York Historical Society, who was assisted by Robert Sawchuck, the conservator of paintings at the National Academy of Design. The task was especially difficult, because La Farge chose to work in an encaustic medium—a mingling of wax and oil—that conventional methods of cleaning, retouching, and varnishing would have been sure to injure. We spoke to Ms. Hotchner shortly after she had completed the restoration and had returned safely to terra firma from a scaffolding high above the chancel floor. "La Farge was seeking to achieve an opalescent, ethereal effect with his encaustic, appropriate to the subject matter and evocative of Renaissance frescoes," she told us. "All very well for the maker of a painting, but hard on the conservators who follow him. In this case, the major needs were cleaning, reattachment of flaking paint, reattachment of the canvas at points where it had become separated from the wall, removal of later overpainting, and a certain amount of in-painting to correct the damage done by previous cleanings. We did this in-painting in watercolors, because water-base paints are easily removed. It's an ethical principle with contemporary conservators that the process of restoration be completely reversible. That means that conservators a hundred years from now will be free to maintain the paintings.”

Concerning the actual painting of the mural, a small, teasing mystery remains. When the mural was cleaned, an inscription at the bottom of the canvas was found, which read “John La Farge and Mary Whitney carried out this work with the assistance of Geo. L. Rose and Gabriel Chênes, 1886-1888.” Who is the Mary Whitney with whom La Farge was prepared to share credit for the painting? Was she a friend? A mistress? Or perhaps a relative of the financier William C. Whitney, who was buying works of art from La Farge during the eighteen-eighties? There are many ghostly presences hovering about the Church of the Ascension, but Mary Whitney is the most elusive of them; she appears to have slipped out of history. We hope that someday she can be drawn back in and given a just measure of fame.



“*Big bows on shoes. More notes from the underground.*”

Nothing Unusual

OUR friend who lives in the loft downtown writes:

One of the stories my wife and I like to tell is about how we found our loft. Nothing at all unusual happened—that's the story. Five years ago, we picked up the *Times* late one Sunday morning and noticed an ad in the real-estate section. It said “Snny lft. lndmrk bldg. Reasonbl. No fxtr fee, No agnt.” My wife and I went to take a look, mostly out of a mordant curiosity about exactly what the catch was. After years of searching for a new place—the place we lived in was absurdly small—we didn't really expect to find one.

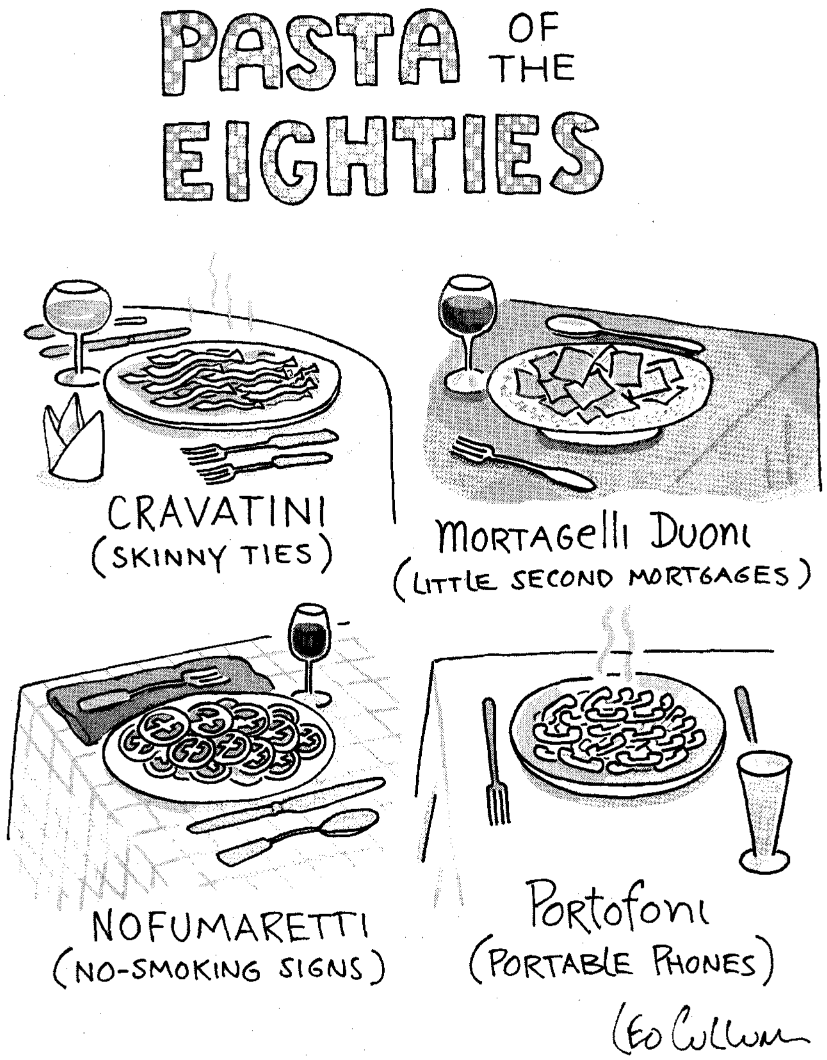
This was different. The landlady—Mrs. Franz, I'll call her—who owned the building and lived there, showed us the loft. She was a landlady out of “My Sister Eileen” or “Barefoot in the Park”—a charming middle-aged woman with a heavy Middle European accent. What she showed us was just as described: a spacious, sunny loft in a landmark cast-iron building. The rent was very reasonable, and was “stabilized.” There was no fixture fee and no broker. Mrs. Franz invited us into her apartment for coffee and sweet rolls, and after asking us some weirdly unpointed questions (not “How long have you worked for your present employer?” but “Who is your favorite composer?”) she brought out a lease, we signed it, and then she kissed us and we kissed her back. For a couple of months after we moved in, we walked around jumpily, waiting for the other shoe to drop, but it never did. One of our friends said that we must have won some kind of contest that the landlords of New York cynically allow one couple to win every few years, just so that people will stay in the game.

It's a wonderful building, and a very nice place to live. Almost all our neighbors are artists and have lived in the building since it first went residential. A few months ago, my wife and I and the artist who works in hay and lives just upstairs met at a good Mexican place down the street. Our artist-neighbor is in her late thirties and comes originally from Texas. She ordered a burrito verde and the kind of Mexican beer you drink with lime, and began reminiscing about her first years as an artist in New York, back in the late seventies, and about all the people who had lived in our loft before us. She asked us if we had ever met someone I'll call Jerome. We said no—who was Jerome? She looked genuinely surprised. Hadn't we taken over the lease from Jerome? We said no, we hadn't. Oh, she said. Then she leaned way back, took a draught of beer—a subaltern in a Kipling story, about to tell a tale—and began to talk about Jerome.

“This all began in the early nineteen-eighties, just after I started working with dead fish,” she said. “I used to go into Chinatown, and I would see all these beautiful dead fish—carp, I guess they were, gold and aquamarine—and they seemed sacred or holy, somehow. I was so drawn to them that I would spend all my money buying them, and then I would bring them home. I painted my walls black, so that the fish would show up better, and I hung the fish on the walls, like reliefs. Mrs. Franz used to invite me for tea sometimes—she was so sweet to me—and I could see that she was a little puzzled by something. The smell coming from my place, I guess, though from outside you weren't getting *half* the smell.

"The bad part started when Richard, my husband, seemed to be going blind. He woke up one morning with a horrible eye infection, and I persuaded somebody at the N.Y.U. clinic to look at him. The doctor asked us if there was anything unusual in our home environment, and I said yes, about two hundred dead fish. The doctor thought I was being fey, and he gave me one of those N.Y.U.-clinic smiles—you know, silvery—and then I had to insist that I was serious, there *were* two hundred dead fish in our home environment.

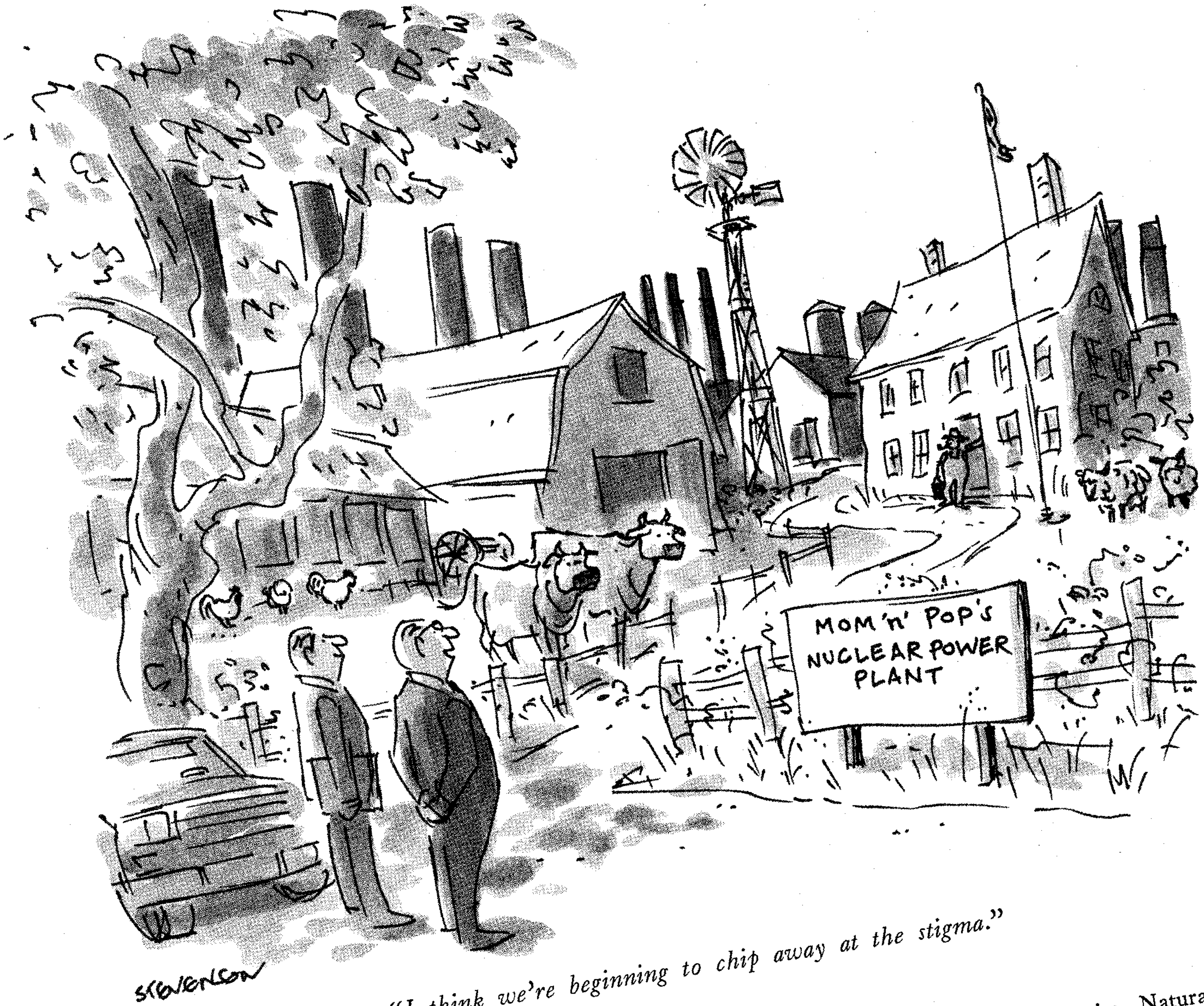
"Richard's losing his sight made me think a little about getting rid of all the fish. But the doctor wasn't sure that my fish were responsible, so I didn't do anything right away. It was just around then that Jerome began practicing with his punk-rock band every night downstairs. Jerome lived in the loft where you live now. He had been there for about five years, I guess, and he was the son of ——." Here she named a man who back in the early sixties had been a very successful comedian. "I suppose he had some money from his father. Anyway, he was always searching for himself, going from enthusiasm to enthusiasm, and was living in a pretty squalid, interesting way down in your loft. The thing about Jerome was that he wasn't just one of those people who pass from enthusiasm to enthusiasm. Jerome passed from enthusiasm to enthusiasm and was still enthusiastic about the previous enthusiasm. If you went down to visit him, you would find him smoking opium while he was doing T'ai Chi and at the same time he'd be singing Gershwin songs. By the early eighties, his enthusiasm was punk rock. Well, it was really punk-rock revival, but if you lived upstairs from it, it just sounded like punk rock. He would bring a pickup band home every night from one of the clubs, and they would play until four or five in the morning. I used to pound on the floor, to beg them to quiet down. They never did. I guess they thought we were joining in.



"I don't think I would really have gone downstairs to make a fuss, though, if Richard hadn't hurt his back. This was while he was recovering from the eye infection. One day, he was just walking across the loft and he collapsed on the floor. We know now that it was a ruptured disk, but then all we could afford to do was call up the clinic again. They told me not to move him. I think now that they meant don't move him *a lot*, but I thought then that they meant don't move him *at all*. I left him there, right where he had fallen, like a warrior. So Richard was lying there on the floor, and the big *thump, thump* of the bass guitar coming from downstairs hurt him. I went downstairs to talk to Jerome about it, but as soon as he let me in I sort of got distracted, because all over your loft there were these cages full of rats."

Seeing our reaction, she said, "Oh, they weren't from the loft. He had *brought* them all there. He got them from some laboratory supplier, or something. Not black rats, or anything. White rats. They still made me uneasy, but Jerome was very cheerful about it all, and he told me he had become convinced that it was his vocation to become the— I don't know, sort of the rat savior of New York. He explained to me that he wanted to perform a magic ritual of some kind that would summon all the rats of New York into your loft—bring them cascading in from the sewers and the warehouses and the refuse piles. He showed me a book he had been reading—something about Javanese ritual—that had a rat invocation in it. He had made some kind of altar, and he showed me where he had pounded holes through the baseboards under the front window, so that the rats could all rush in and be welcomed.

"I went back to my loft, and it suddenly occurred to me that Jerome was crazy. It came over me like a hard, simple fact: This is not some sort of interesting Beuysian ritual. Jerome is



"I think we're beginning to chip away at the stigma."

crazy. So I went down and told Mrs. Franz, and she let herself into his place while he was out at the club. She saw the whole scene—the rats in cages, the holes in the baseboards, the altar—and somehow she got an emergency eviction order issued, or whatever they call it, and stuck it on his door.

"About four-thirty that morning, I heard a sound that wasn't so much a scamper as a kind of low *whoosh* with gravel in it, like water breaking on pebbles. At first I thought it was the radiators, but then I remembered that it was the middle of July. It was a terribly hot night, and I didn't have anything on, but I went to the back door and opened it, and there, pouring up the stairs in this white wave, were all Jerome's rats, coming to eat my fish. Apparently, Jerome got home at about four—back from CBGB, or wherever—and he saw the eviction notice, and I guess he thought, Well, O.K., they want me out, they want my stuff out.

"The first thing I did was to slam the door, and then I ran to the closet and put on a pair of stiletto heels that I'd last worn in high school back home. My husband couldn't get up, of course, and a lot of the fish were on the floor. I didn't know what to do. I started throwing dead fish out the window. One at a time at first, and then more and more. I've often wondered what everyone down below must have thought, being rained on by all those beautiful fish.

"Well, of course, all the commotion woke up Mrs. Franz, and she came out in her nightgown and saw those white rats flooding out of your loft and racing up the stairs. Naturally, she thought of me, and she ran up the front stairs and let herself into my apartment. She was sort of thrown back by the smell, as if she'd been punched, but she recovered and came on in, and saw me standing nude in red stiletto heels, over Richard's body, throwing carp out of the window onto the street.

"It took almost a week before things were back to normal—before all the rats were trapped, and everything. I decided that I really had to find some other material to work with than dead fish, so I took the fish that were left and went uptown on the subway and put them in the trees in Central Park. They looked very beautiful there, too. The next week, I started working with hay. And a week or so later you two moved into Jerome's loft."

RUNNING THROUGH THE WALL

Hundreds of fans jammed the book department at Harrods department store in London to snap up more than 1,000 autographed copies of actress *JOAN COLLINS's* first novel, "Prime Time."... A Harrods spokeswoman said the sale of 1,000 autographed books in an hour—some signed in advance—was a record for the store, breaking a record set just two weeks ago when actor *KIRK DOUGLAS's* autobiography, "The Ragman's Son," sold about 900 copies when he spent an hour autographing books.

—*Associated Press.*

Chuck Barris, creator of "The Gong Show," his face set hard, signed his warmup books outside a Waldenbooks in Houston. Yes. He was spelling his name right, with two "r"s. His hand was moving well. He felt good—tense but good. He took a deep breath, crushed out a cigarette, and went inside and started autographing copies of "You and Me Babe." An hour later, he had autographed over *six hundred* copies. At this time, 1974, this was a feat that was considered unapproachable. Today, schoolchildren can autograph six hundred books in an hour. Many can autograph eight hundred, and scores in the low nine hundreds are commonplace. The incredible has become the expected. The outlandish has become the normal. The weird has become the everyday.

Yet surely there is some limit, some barrier beyond which book signers cannot go. History has not been kind to those who have predicted limits. Hans Fleeder, a University of Colorado psychology-of-the-hand expert, predicted in 1966 that Jackie Susann's mark of two hundred and eighty-six signings would stand forever. Within a year, Susann's mark had been broken over a dozen times. Today, tapes of sixties-era book signings look like slow motion.

We look at them and think, *Too slow.* But we also think, *How fast can we go?*

For years, this question was a purely hypothetical one: ask fifty-nine "experts" and you might receive fifty-nine "expert" opinions, along with a great deal of tedious conversation. Today, however, we seem on the verge of a breakthrough. Today, for the first time, we seem close to an answer to that age-old question *How many books can a celebrity author sign in an hour?*

There are many facets to this inquiry. Let us examine them.

Cultural Factors

The world population has tripled in this century. This has had an enormous impact. The equation is simple: the more people, the more paper. The more paper, the more printing. The more printing, the more words. The more people, paper, printing, and words, the more books, the more chances to exceed book-signing limits.

Improved nutrition is also a factor here. For example, Jackie Susann often ate a breakfast of a chocolate doughnut and a cup of Sanka. Today's fast signer wouldn't dream of starting a day without a vast array of complex carbohydrates and carefully administered training fluids. A few years ago, in a famous incident, Sidney Sheldon, minutes before a signing, ate a Pop-Tart and drank a Dr. Brown's. Fifteen minutes later, no one could read his signature.

Forty minutes later, Sheldon began to sign the name "Rosemary Rogers" in his books. An E.M.S. unit was called, and the exhausted creator of "I Dream of Jeannie" was rushed to the nearest hospital and swiftly hooked up to an I.V. drip. Today, thankfully, Sheldon is all right, but his story stands as a sad reminder of what a book signer faces when he truly "goes for it."

Equipment

Perhaps nowhere else has modern technology had such a great impact. It is well known that Erich Segal experimented with a primitive felt-tip pen (actually a Q-Tip coated with some foreign substance) as early as 1970, but it wasn't until the Mario Puzo era that felt-tip pens became the norm.

Today, the felt-tip pen threatens to become as archaic as a big Mississippi riverboat. Just last summer, a team at Caltech came up with a pen they called, whimsically, the CR-319. The CR-319 was so technologically advanced that it had to be scrapped after it broke the sound barrier during a signing at B. Dalton's in Cincinnati. They've gone back to the drawing board on the CR-319, yet experts still predict that we will see faster pens in the future.

"It's inevitable," says Gaylord Tendon, of Yo Labs. "Fast pens are sexy, and people will always be attracted to them."

Other Factors

The great unknown factor in book signing has been "hushed up" in most book-signing circles until recent months, and is still largely unknown among the public at large: steroids. No one knows just how pervasive the use of these "signing enhancers" may be, but highly placed members of the Authors Guild agree that it is probably a common practice.

"Anytime you'd see an author come in for a signing with a really big hand, you had to be suspicious," says Gene Fibula, owner of the Booknook, in Madison, Wisconsin. "You'd see more and more of these authors—little skinny guys with these gigantic metacarpals. You knew what was happening, but you never said anything. Why alarm the crowd?"

Testing has proved impracticable. Authors are not stupid; they know how to mask the use of steroids. In a highly publicized event in 1987, Erica Jong was nabbed for blood doping, but the matter was dropped when further tests indicated that laboratory machines had been reacting to her nail polish. But most book signers, tragically, will continue to abuse almost anything modern science will make available to them.

The Human Factor

The human factor will be involved in the future of book signing no matter what agents and oddsmakers may predict. Book signing is exclusively a human activity. No gazelles, for instance, do it. Knowing what we know about humans, it's hard not to imagine a scene like this:

Judith Krantz is at the mall ten minutes early. Nervously she twists her head one way, then the other. She extends her fingers. Yes, she nods; she is ready.

She puts her hands on her handler's shoulders. Krantz and her entourage enter the arena and move through the wildly excited crowd. She sits down at the desk, half hidden by the mountains of volumes that tower above her on all sides, and takes out her pen. She turns and whispers to her handler. It is a harsh whisper—harsh from intensity:

"I'm going to sign these books."

It's not hard to imagine an author like Krantz, on a perfect day, in the best of shape and with the best equipment, shattering our concept of book signing.

—Frank Gannon

SNOW

TWELVE years old, and I was so bored I was combing my hair just for the hell of it. This particular Saturday afternoon, time was stretching out unpleasantly in front of me. I held the comb under the tap and then stared into the bathroom mirror as I raked the wave at the front of my scalp upward so that it would look casual and sharp and perfect. For inspiration I had my transistor radio, balanced on the doorknob, tuned to an AM Top Forty station. But the music was making me jumpy, and instead of looking casual my hair, soaking wet, had the metallic curve of the rear fins of a De Soto. I looked aerodynamic but not handsome. I dropped the comb into the sink and went down the hallway to my brother's room.

Ben was sitting at his desk, crumpling up papers and tossing them into a wastebasket near the window. He was a great shot, particularly when he was throwing away his homework. His stainless-steel sword, a souvenir of military school, was leaning against the bookcase, and I could see my pencil-thin reflection in it as I stood in his doorway. "Did you hear about the car?" Ben asked, not bothering to look at me. He was gazing through his window at Five Oaks Lake.

"What car?"

"The car that went through the ice two nights ago. Thursday. Look. You can see the pressure ridge near Eagle Island."

I couldn't see any pressure ridge; it was too far away. Cars belonging to ice fishermen were always breaking through the ice, but swallowing up a car was a slow process in January, though not in March or April, and the drivers usually got out safely. The clear lake ice reflected perfectly the flat gray sky this drought winter, and we could still see the spiky brown grass on our back lawn. It crackled and crunched whenever I walked on it.

"I don't see it," I said. "I can't see the hole. Where did you hear about this car? Did Pop tell you?"

"No," Ben said. "Other sources." Ben's sources, his network of friends and enemies, were always calling him on the telephone to tell him things. He basked in information. Now he gave me a quick glance. "Holy smoke," he said. "What did you do to your hair?"

"Nothing," I said. "I was just combing it."

"You look like that guy," he said. "The one in the movies."

"Which guy?"

"That Harvey guy."

"Jimmy Stewart?"

"Of course not," he said. "You know the one I mean. Everybody knows that guy. The Harvey guy." When I looked blank, he said, "Never mind. Let's go down to the lake and look at that car. You'd better tell them we're going." He gestured toward the other end of the house.

In the kitchen I informed my parents that I was headed somewhere with my brother, and my mother, chopping carrots for one of her stews, looked up at me and my hair. "Be back by five," she said. "Where did you say you were off to?"

"We're driving to Navarre," I said. "Ben has to get his skates sharpened."

My stepfather's eyebrows started to go up; he exchanged a glance with my mother—the usual pantomime of skepticism. I turned around and ran out of the kitchen before they could stop me. I put on my boots, overcoat, and gloves, and hurried outside to my brother's car, a 1952 Rocket 88. He was already inside. The motor roared.

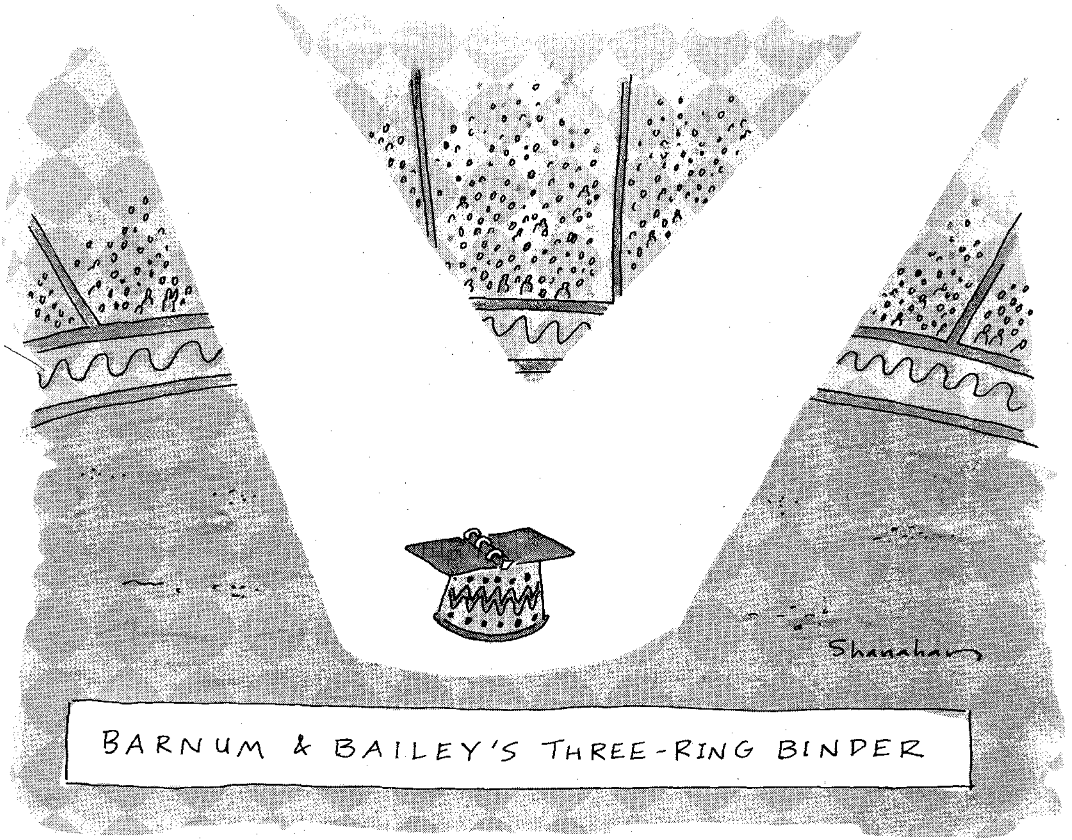
The interior of the car smelled of gum, cigarettes, wet wool, analgesic balm, and after-shave. "What'd you tell them?" my brother asked.

"I said you were going to Navarre to get your skates sharpened."

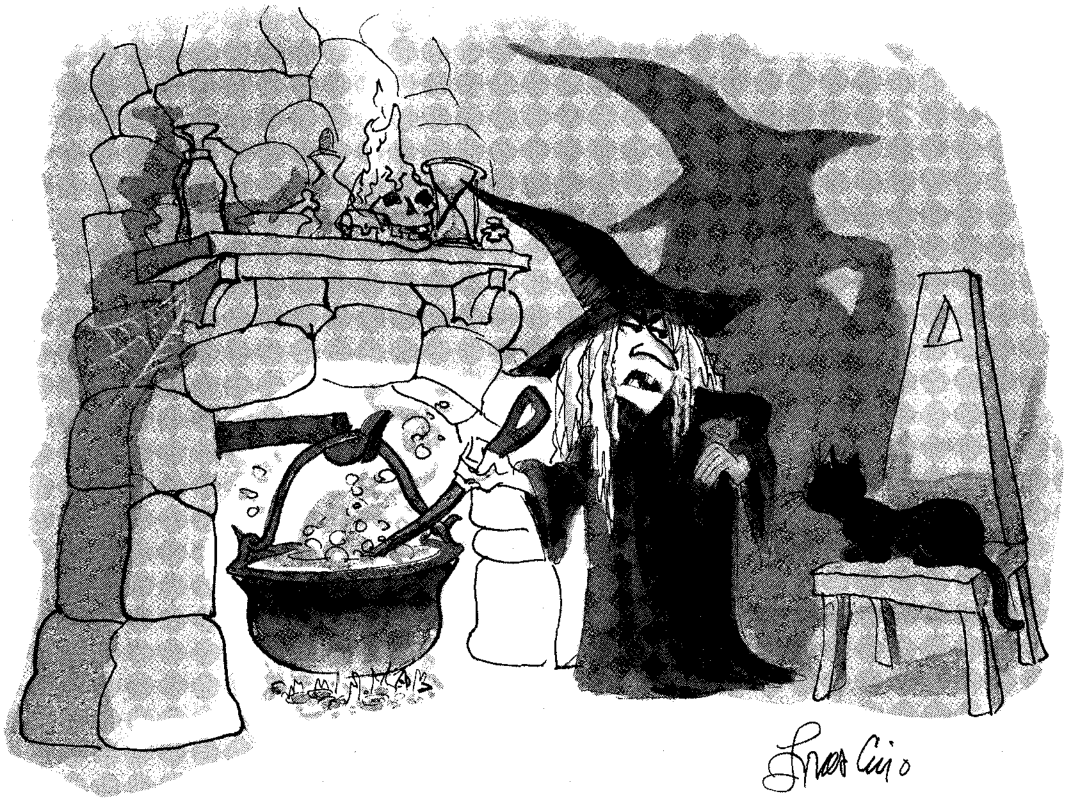
He put the car into first gear, then sighed. "Why'd you do that? I have to explain everything to you. Number one: my skates aren't in the car. What if they ask to see them when we get home? I won't have them. That's a problem, isn't it? Number two: when you lie about being somewhere, you make sure you have a friend who's there who can say you *were* there, even if you weren't. Unfortunately, we don't have any friends in Navarre."

"Then we're safe," I said. "No one will say we *weren't* there."

He shook his head. Then he took off his glasses and examined them as if my odd ideas were visible right there on the frames. I was just doing my job, being his private fool, but I knew he liked me and liked to have me around. My unworldli-



BARNUM & BAILEY'S THREE-RING BINDER



"I'm not sending Christmas cards this year."

• •

ness amused him; it gave him a chance to lecture me. But now, tired of wasting words on me, he turned on the radio. Pulling out onto the highway, he steered the car in his customary way. He had explained to me that only very old or very sick people actually grip steering wheels. You didn't have to hold the wheel to drive a car. Resting your arm over the top of the wheel gave a better appearance. You dangled your hand down, preferably with a cigarette in it, so that the car, the entire car, responded to the mere pressure of your wrist.

"Hey," I said. "Where are we going? This isn't the way to the lake."

"We're not going there first. We're going there second."

"Where are we going first?"

"We're *going* to Five Oaks. We're going to get Stephanie. Then we'll see the car."

"How come we're getting her?"

"Because she wants to see it. She's never seen a car underneath the ice before. She'll be impressed."

"Does she know we're coming?"

He gave me that look again. "What do they teach you at that school you go to? Of course she knows. We have a date."

"A date? It's three o'clock in the afternoon," I said. "You can't have a date at three in the afternoon. Besides, I'm along."

"Don't argue," Ben said. "Pay attention."

By the time we reached Five Oaks, the heater in my brother's car was blowing out warm air in tentative gusts. If we were going to get Stephanie, his current girlfriend, it was fine with me. I liked her smile—she had an overbite, the same as I did, but she didn't seem self-conscious about it—and I liked the way she shut her eyes when she laughed. She had listened to my crystal radio set and admired my collection of igneous rocks on one of her two visits to our house. My brother liked to bring his girlfriends over to our house because the house was old and large and, my brother said, they would be impressed by the empty rooms and the long hallways and the laundry chutes that dropped down into nowhere. They'd be snowed. Snowing girls was something I knew better than to ask my brother about. You had to learn about it by watching and listening. That's why he had brought me along.

Ben parked outside Stephanie's house and told me to wait in the car. I had nothing to do but look at houses and telephone poles. Stephanie's front-porch swing had rusted chains, and the paint around her house seemed to have blistered in cobweb patterns. One drab lamp with a low-wattage bulb was on near an upstairs window. I could see the lampshade: birds—I couldn't tell what kind—had been painted on it. I adjusted the dashboard clock. It didn't run, but I liked to have it seem accurate. My brother had said that anyone who invented a clock that would really work in a car would become a multimillionaire. Clocks in cars never work, he said, because the mainsprings can't stand the shock of potholes. I checked my wristwatch and yawned. The inside of the front window began to frost over with my breath. I decided that when I grew up I would invent a new kind of timepiece for cars, without springs or gears. At three-twenty I adjusted the clock again. One minute later, my brother came out of the house with Stephanie. She saw me in the car, and she smiled.

I opened the door and got out. "Hi, Steph," I said. "I'll get in the back seat."

"That's O.K., Russell," she said, smiling, showing her overbite. "Sit up in front with us."

"Really?"

She nodded. "Yeah. Keep us warm."

She scuttled in next to my brother, and I squeezed in on her right side, with my shoulder against the door. As soon as the car started, she and my brother began to hold hands: he steered with his left wrist over the steering wheel, and she held his right hand. I watched all this, and Stephanie noticed me watching. "Do you want one?" she asked me.

"What?"

"A hand." She gazed at me, perfectly serious. "My other hand."

"Sure," I said.

"Well, take my glove off," she said. "I can't do it by myself." My brother started chuckling, but she stopped him with a look. I took Stephanie's wrist in my left hand and removed her glove, finger by finger. I hadn't held hands with anyone since second grade. Her hand was not much larger than mine, but holding it gave me an odd sensation, because it was a woman's hand, and where my fingers were bony hers were soft. She was wearing a bright-green cap, and when I glanced up at it she said, "I like your hair, Russell. It's kind of slummy. You're getting to look dangerous. Is there any gum?"

I figured she meant in the car. "There's some up there on the dashboard," Ben said. His car always had gum in it. It was a museum of gum. The ashtrays were full of cigarette butts and gum, mixed together, and the floor was flecked silver from the foil wrappers.

"I can't reach it," Stephanie said. "You two have both my hands tied down."

"O.K.," I said. I reached up with my free hand and took a piece of gum and unwrapped it. The gum was light pink, a sunburn color.

"Now what?" I asked.

"What do you think?" She looked down at me, smiled again, then opened her mouth. I suddenly felt shy. "Come on, Russell," she said. "Haven't you ever given gum to a girl before?" I raised my hand with the gum in it. She kept her eyes open and on me. I reached forward, and just as I got the gum close to her mouth she opened wider, and I slid the gum in over her tongue without even brushing it against her lipstick. She closed and began chewing.

"Thank you," she said. Stephanie and my brother nudged each other. Then they broke out in short quick laughs—vacation laughter. I knew that what had happened hinged on my ignorance, but that I wasn't exactly the butt of the joke and could laugh, too, if I wanted. My palm was sweaty, and she could probably feel it. The sky had turned darker, and I wondered whether, if I was still alive fifty years from now, I would remember any of this. I saw an old house on the side of the highway with a cracked upstairs window, and I thought, That's what I'll remember from this whole day when I'm old—that one cracked window.

Stephanie was looking out at the dry winter fields and suddenly said, "The state of Michigan. You know who this state is for? You know who's really happy in this state?"

"No," I said. "Who?"

"Chickens and squirrels," she said. "They love it here."

MY brother parked the car on the driveway down by our dock, and we walked out onto the ice on the bay.

Stephanie was stepping awkwardly, a high-center-of-gravity shuffle. "Is it safe?" she asked.

"Sure, it's safe," my brother said. "Look." He began to jump up and down. Ben was heavy enough to be a tackle on his high-school football team, and sounds of ice cracking reverberated all through the bay and beyond into the center of the lake, a deep echo. Already, four ice fishermen's houses had been set up on the ice two hundred feet out—four brightly painted shacks, male hideaways—and I could see tire tracks over the thin layer of sprinkled snow. "Clear the snow and look down into it," he said.

JEROME

In Dürer's engraving
you sit hunched over your desk,
writing, with an extraneous
halo around your head.
You have everything you need: a mind
at ease with itself, and the generous
sunlight on pen, page, ink,
the few chairs, the vellum-bound books,
the skull on the windowsill that keeps you
honest (*memento mori*).
What you are concerned with
in your subtle craft is not simply
the life of language—to take
those boulderlike nouns of the Hebrew
text, those torrential verbs,
into your ear and remake them
in the hic-haec-hoc of your time—
but an innermost truth. For years
you listened when the Spirit was
the faintest breeze, not even the
breath of a sound. And wondered
how the word of God could be clasped
between the covers of a book.
Now, by the latticed window,
absorbed in your work,
the word becomes flesh, becomes sunlight
and leaf mold, the smell of fresh bread
from the bakery down the lane,
the rumble of an oxcart, the unconscious
ritual of a young woman
combing her hair, the bray
of a mule, an infant crying:
the whole vibrant life
of Bethlehem, outside your door.
None of it is an intrusion.
You are sitting in the magic circle
of yourself. In a corner, the small
watchdog is curled up, dreaming,
and beside it, on the threshold, the lion
dozes, with half-closed eyes.

—STEPHEN MITCHELL

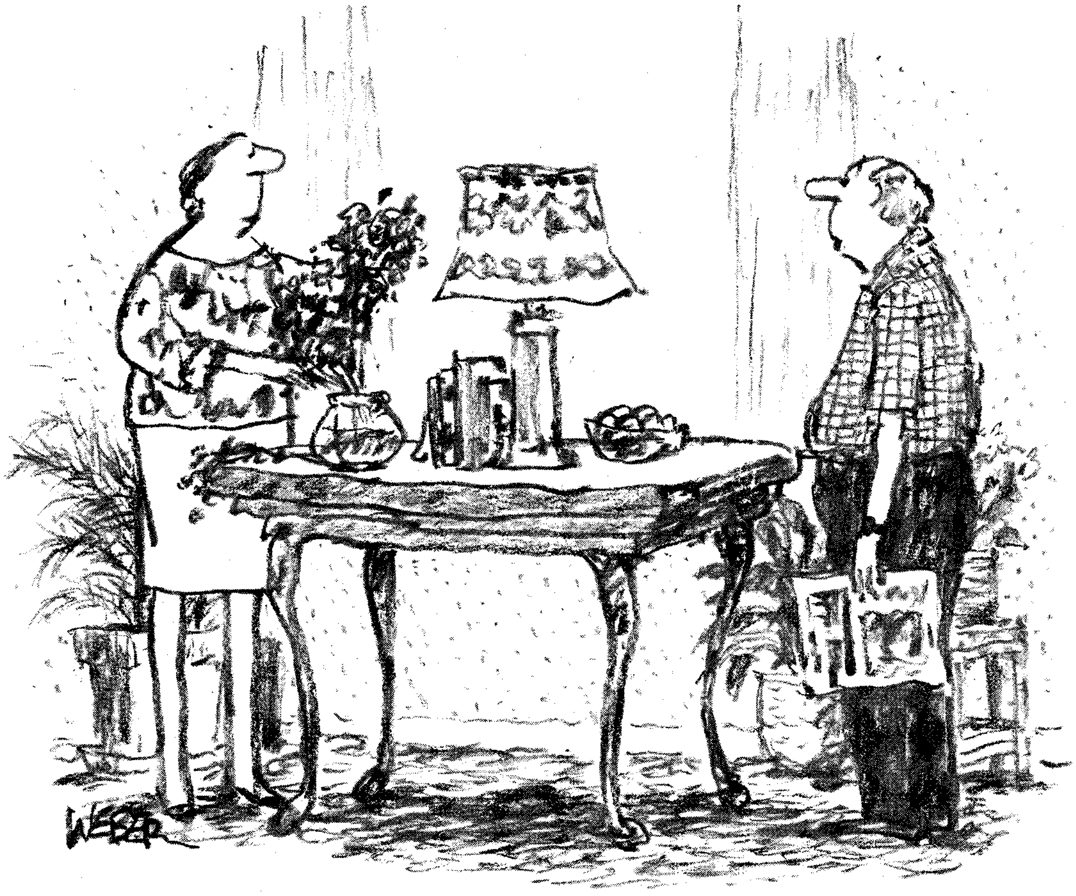
• •

After lowering herself to her knees, Stephanie dusted the snow away. She held her hands to the side of her head and looked. "It's real thick," she said. "Looks a foot thick. How come a car went through?"

"It went down in a channel," Ben said, walking ahead of us and calling backward so that his voice seemed to drift in and out of the wind. "It went over a pressure ridge, and that's all she wrote."

"Did anyone drown?"

He didn't answer. She ran ahead to catch up to him, slipping, losing her balance, then recovering it. In fact I knew that no one had drowned. My stepfather had told me that the man driving the car had somehow—I wasn't sure how a person did this—pulled himself out through the window. Apparently the front end dropped through the ice first, but the car had stayed up for a few minutes before it gradually eased itself into the lake. The last two nights had been very cold, with lows around fifteen below zero, and by now the hole the car had gone through had iced over.



"You wish we were rich? Sweetheart, why didn't you tell me that thirty years ago?"

• •

Both my brother and Stephanie were quite far ahead of me, and I could see them clutching at each other, Stephanie leaning against him, and my brother trying out his military-school peacock walk. I attempted this walk for a moment, then thought better of it. The late-afternoon January light was getting very raw: the sun came out for a few seconds, lighting and coloring what there was, then disappeared again, closing up and leaving us in a kind of sour grayness. I wondered if my brother and Stephanie actually liked each other or whether they were friends because they had to be.

I ran to catch up to them. "We should have brought our skates," I said, but they weren't listening to me. Ben was pointing at some clear ice, and Stephanie was nodding.

"Quiet down," my brother said. "Quiet down and listen."

All three of us stood still. Some cloud or other was beginning to drop snow on us, and from the ice underneath our feet we heard a continual chinging and barking as the ice slowly shifted.

"This is exciting," Stephanie said.

My brother nodded, but instead of looking at her he turned slightly to glance at me. Our eyes met, and he smiled.

"It's over there," he said, after a moment. The index finger of his black leather glove pointed toward a spot in the channel between Eagle Island and Crane Island where the ice was ridged and unnaturally clear. "Come on," he said.

We walked. I was ready at any moment to throw myself flat if the ice broke beneath me. I was a good swimmer—Ben had taught me—but I wasn't sure how well I would swim wearing all my clothes. I was absorbent and would probably sink head first, like that car.

"Get down," my brother said.

We watched him lowering himself to his hands and knees, and we followed. This was probably something he had learned in military school, this crawling. "We're ambushing this car," Stephanie said, creeping in front of me.

"There it is," he said. He pointed down.

This new ice was so smooth that it reminded me of the thick glass in the Shedd Aquarium, in Chicago. But instead of seeing a loggerhead turtle or a barracuda I looked through the ice and saw this abandoned car, this two-door Impala. It was wonderful to see—white-painted steel filtered by ice and lake water—and I wanted to laugh out of sheer happiness at the craziness of it. Dimly lit but still visible through the murk, it sat down there, its huge trunk and the sloping fins just a bit green in the algae-colored light. This is a joke, I thought, a practical joke meant to confuse the fish. I could see the car well enough to notice its radio antenna, and the windshield wipers halfway up the front window, and I could see the chrome of the front grille reflecting the dull light that ebbed down to it from where we were lying on our stomachs, ten feet above it.

"That is one unhappy automobile," Stephanie said. "Did anyone get caught inside?"

"No," I said, because no one had, and then my brother said, "Maybe."

I looked at him quickly. As usual, he wasn't looking back at me. "They aren't sure yet," he said. "They won't be able to tell until they bring the tow truck out here and pull it up."

Stephanie said, "Well, either they know or they don't. Someone's down there or not, right?"

Ben shook his head. "Maybe they don't know. Maybe there's a dead body in the back seat of that car. Or in the trunk."

"Oh, no," she said. She began to edge backward.

"I was just fooling you," my brother said. "There's nobody down there."

"What?" She was behind the area where the ice was smooth, and she stood up.

"I was just teasing you," Ben said. "The guy that was in the car got out. He got out through the window."

"Why did you lie to me?" Stephanie asked. Her arms were crossed in front of her chest.

"I just wanted to give you a thrill," he said. He stood up and walked over to where she was standing. He put his arm around her.

"I don't mind normal," she said. "Something could be normal and I'd like that, too." She glanced at me. Then she whispered into my brother's ear for about fifteen seconds, which is a long time if you're watching. Ben nodded and bent forward and whispered something in return, but I swivelled and looked around the bay at all the houses on the shore, and the old amusement park in the distance. Lights were beginning to go on, and, as if that weren't enough, it was snowing. As far as I was concerned, all those houses were guilty, both the houses and the people in them. The whole state of Michigan was guilty—all the adults, anyway—and I wanted to see them locked up.

"Wait here," my brother said. He turned and went quickly off toward the shore of the bay.

"Where's he going?" I asked.

"He's going to get his car," she said.

"What for?"

"He's going to bring it out on the ice. Then he's going to drive me home across the lake."

"That's really stupid!" I said. "That's really one of the dumbest things I ever heard! You'll go through the ice, just like that car down there did."

"No, we won't," she said. "I know we won't."

"How do you know?"

"Your brother understands this lake," she said. "He knows where the pressure ridges are and everything. He just *knows*, Russell. You have to trust him. And he can always get off the ice if he thinks it's not safe. He can always find a road."

"Well, I'm not going with you," I said. She nodded. I looked at her, and I wondered if she might be crazed with the bad judgment my parents had told me all teen-agers had. Bad judgment of this kind was starting to interest me; it was a powerful antidote for boredom, which seemed worse.

"You don't want to come?"

"No," I said. "I'll walk home." I gazed up the hill, and in the distance I could see the lights of our house, a twenty-minute walk across the bay.

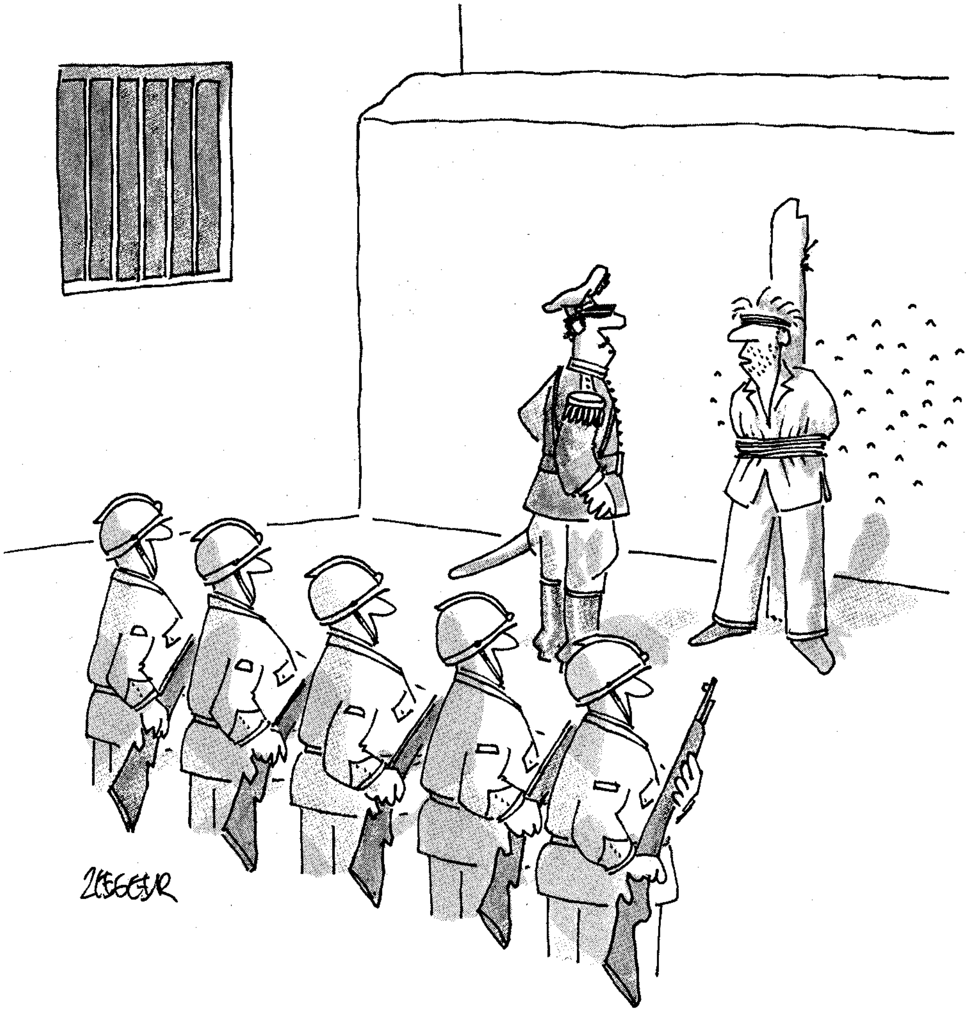
"O.K.," Stephanie said. "I didn't think you'd want to come along." We waited. "Russell, do you think your brother is interested in me?"

"I guess so," I said. I wasn't sure what she meant by "interested." Anybody interested him, up to a point. "He says he likes you."

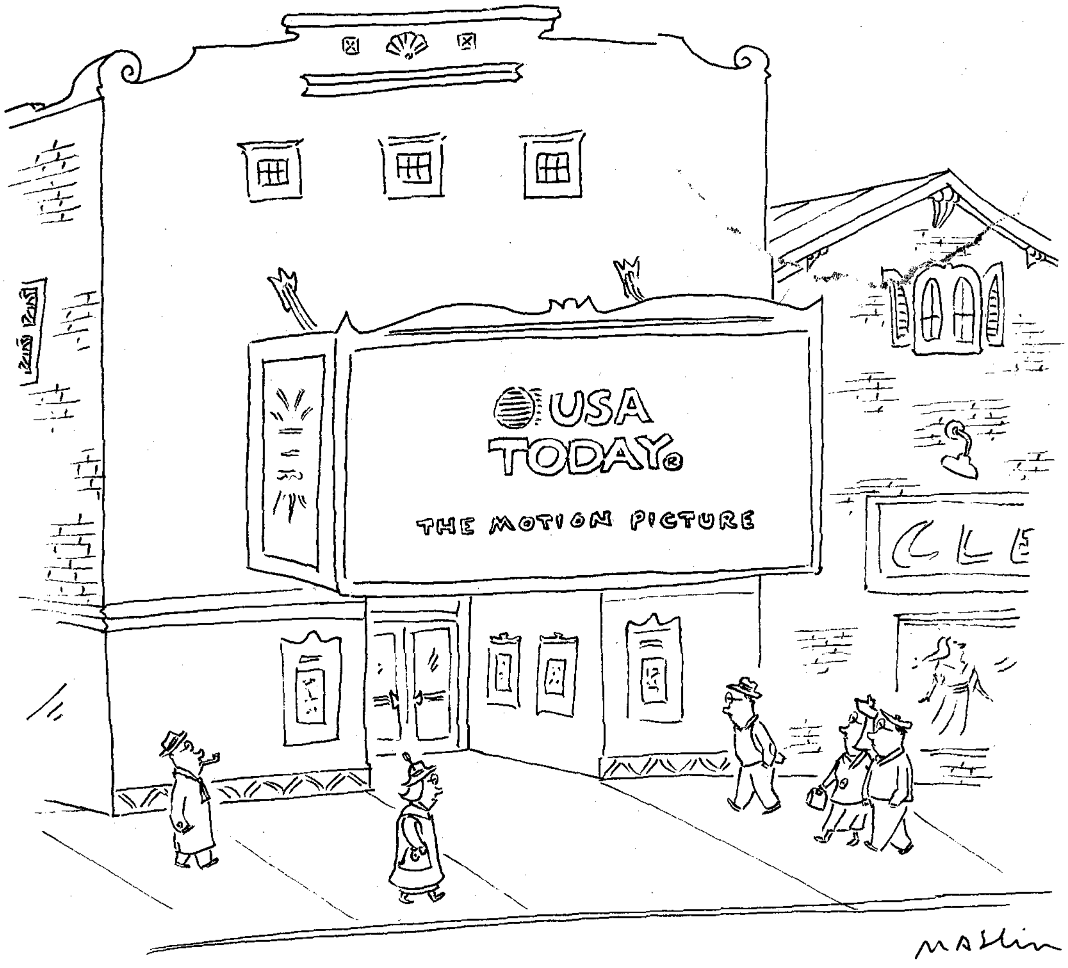
"That's funny, because I feel like something in the Lost and Found," she said, scratching her boot into the ice. "You know, one of those gloves that don't match anything." She put her hand on my shoulder. "One glove. One left-hand glove, with the thumb missing."

I could hear Ben's car starting, and then I saw it heading down Gallagher's boat landing. I was glad he was driving out toward us, because I didn't want to talk to her this way anymore.

Stephanie was now watching my brother's car. His headlights were on.



"Level with me, Colonel. What kind of worst-case scenario are we talking about here?"



It was odd to see a car with headlights on out on the ice, where there was no road. I saw my brother accelerate and fishtail the car, then slam on the brakes and do a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree spin. He floored it, revving the back wheels, which made a high, whining sound on the ice, like a buzz saw working through wood. He was having a thrill and soon would give Stephanie another thrill by driving her home across ice that might break at any time. Thrills did it, whatever it was. Thrills led to other thrills.

"Would you look at that," I said.

She turned. After a moment she made a little sound in her throat. I remember that sound. When I see her now, she still makes it—a sign of impatience or worry. After all, she didn't go through the ice in my brother's car on the way home. She and my brother didn't drown, together or separately. Stephanie had two marriages and several children. Recently, she and her second husband adopted a Korean baby. She has the complex dignity of many small-town people who do not say what is on their minds until well after night has fallen. She continues to live in Five Oaks, Michigan, and she works behind the counter at the post office, where I buy stamps from her and gossip, holding up the line, trying to make her smile. She still has an overbite and she still laughs easily, despite the moody expression that comes over her when she relaxes. She has moved back to the same house she grew up in. Even now the exterior paint on that house blisters in cobweb patterns. I keep track of her. She and my brother certainly didn't get married; in fact, they broke up a few weeks after seeing the Chevrolet under ice.

"What are we doing out here?" Stephanie asked. I shook my head. "In the middle of winter, out here on this stupid lake? I'll tell you, Russell, I sure don't know. But I do know that your brother doesn't notice me enough, and I can't love him unless he notices me. You know your brother. You know what he pays attention to. What do I have to do to get him to notice me?"

I was twelve years old. I said, "Take off your shoes."

She stood there, thinking about what I had said, and then, quietly, she bent down and took off her boots, and, putting her hand on my shoulder to balance herself, she took off her brown loafers and her white socks. She stood there in front of me with her bare feet on the ice. I saw in the grayish January light that her toenails were painted. Bare feet with painted toenails on the ice—this was a desperate and beautiful sight, and I shivered and felt my fingers curling inside my gloves.

"How does it feel?" I asked.

"You'll know," she said. "You'll know in a few years."

My brother drove up close to us. He rolled down his window and opened the passenger-side door. He didn't say anything. I watched Stephanie get into the car, carrying her shoes and socks and boots, and then I waved goodbye to them before turning to walk back to our house. I heard the car heading north across the ice. My brother would be looking at Stephanie's bare feet on the floor of his car. He would probably not be saying anything just now.

When I reached our front lawn, I stood out in the dark and looked in through the kitchen window. My mother and stepfather were sitting at the kitchen counter; I couldn't be sure if they were speaking to each other, but then I saw my mother raise her arm in one of her can-you-believe-this gestures. I didn't want to go inside. I wanted to feel cold, so cold that the cold itself became permanently interesting. I took off my overcoat and my gloves. Tilting my head back, I felt some snow fall onto my face. I thought of the word "exposure" and of how once or twice a year deer hunters in the Upper Peninsula died of it, and I bent down and stuck my hand into the snow and frozen grass and held it there. The cold rose from my hand to my elbow, and when I had counted to forty and couldn't stand another second of it, I picked up my coat and gloves and walked into the bright heat of the front hallway.

—Charles Baxter

PERSONAL HISTORY

PROMETHEAN FIRE

THE December wind was blowing hard. It was my first experience of a New England winter. I didn't have a coat or hat, scarf or gloves. In fact, I didn't own any; in Southern California, where I'd been living, one scarcely needed a jacket. I was wearing the only good woollen suit I had. I felt frozen and exposed. Harvard Yard was deserted, as if the university were already shut down for Christmas. Moreover, the terrain was unfamiliar, and walking difficult. (I've been blind since I was nearly four.)

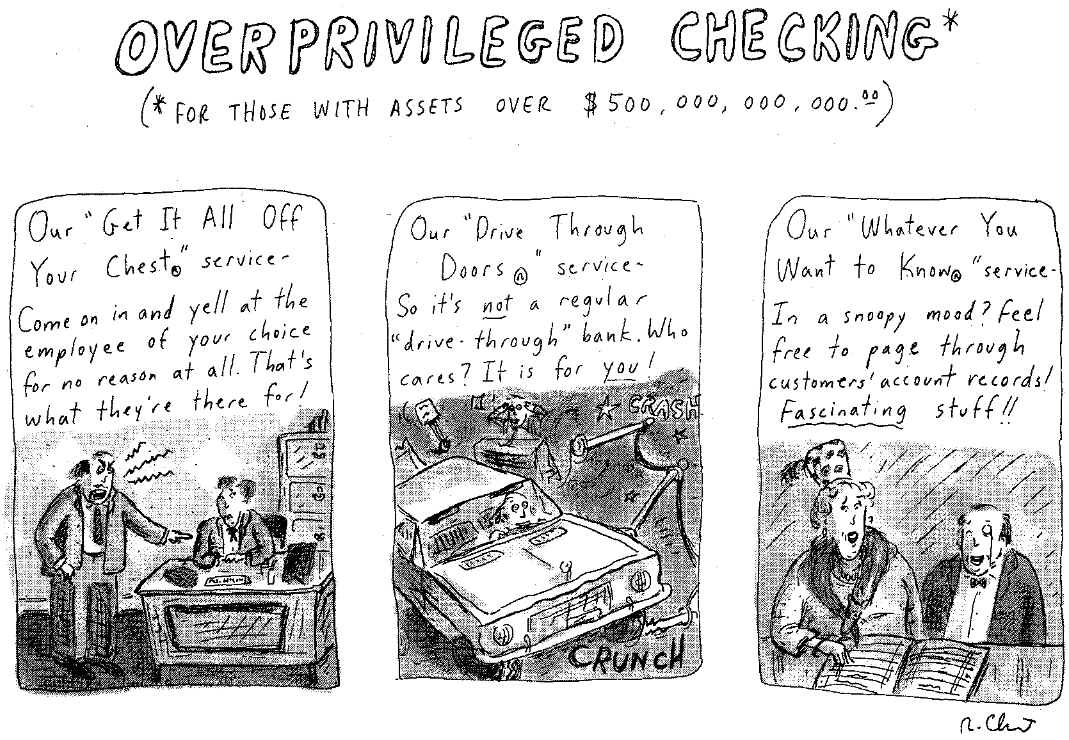
By asking one or two strangers running past, I found my way to the office of Mr. David Henry, the associate director of admissions at Harvard, in University Hall. I was a few minutes early for the interview, and as I waited I tried inconspicuously to warm my hands under my jacket, so I wouldn't have to give him a cold hand to shake.

A few weeks earlier, on November 3, 1953, I had written a letter to Mr. W. T. Jones, one of the professors I admired most at Pomona College, where I was a sophomore, setting forth my reasons for wanting to transfer to an Eastern university. My letter said, in part:

> As you know, for quite a while I have been contemplating the possibility of going East, to Harvard, Yale, Princeton, or Cornell. One of the reasons that made me hesitate in entertaining this thought was the dread of being in an "impersonal institution." To evaluate what an "impersonal institution" means, I attended the University of California at Berkeley this summer and stayed at International House. I found that the cross-section of people that I met there compensated considerably for not being at a small college like Pomona.
>
> If I may enumerate, there are five reasons I feel that in the long run it would be to my advantage to transfer to a larger university:
>
> 1. Since I have already spent three years in the southern part of the United States [I had gone to high school in Arkansas] and will have spent two years on the West Coast by the end of this academic year, I feel it would be worth my while getting to know the eastern part of the United States before I return to India.
>
> 2. I left India when I was only fifteen, and because of the lack of proper educational facilities for the visually handicapped there, I had a very sketchy education. Consequently I was never able to acquire knowledge of the history and culture of my own country, which other children do as a matter of course at school. This I feel to be a serious gap in my education, for in the last analysis I will have to earn my bread in India. By transferring to one of the universities in the East, I will be able to take some courses in Indian history and culture, which are not available to me, of course, at Pomona.
>
> 3. I would like to take a semester or two of Sanskrit. The nationalistic tendency in India will increasingly require an understanding of Sanskrit, which is the foundation of a number of Indian languages. By the way, my knowledge of Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi is limited to speech only, because there was no Braille system for writing them when I was growing up.
>
> 4. As you know, the thing I want to do most after graduation in America is to attend Oxford and get a degree in jurisprudence, which will give me the best chance of a livelihood in India. My financial means are so meagre that the only way I could go to Oxford is by receiving some kind of financial aid from a university or foundation. I feel that this would be easier in the East than at Pomona, if for no other reason than that the larger universities in the East have greater financial resources and contacts.
>
> 5. This reason is very intangible. It is only valid if some of my father's assumptions and mine are right about my future in India. I am bound to encounter some kind of opposition to making my livelihood there because of my handicap, and maybe even because of my Occidental education. We think that my chances for a livelihood might be improved if I had a degree from a very well-known American university.
>
> Before I can transfer to any of the universities mentioned above, I will need some type of financial aid from them, because the states in which they are located do not have a reader's fund, as California does.

Whenever Mr. Jones commented on my papers, he numbered his points, as if he felt that reducing thought to numbered items was the clearest way to think. I was so much under his influence that in those days I numbered practically everything I wrote. Consequently, I had difficulty putting into words the many more reasons I had for wanting to leave Pomona.

When I first got there, I had been excited by the college's exhortation that all who entered Pomona should be "eager, thoughtful, and reverent." After a while, I had come to balk at the emphasis on reverence, which, possibly rooted in the Congregational foundation of the college, often seemed to give the place a predominantly Christian outlook. Sometimes the college gave me the feeling that it was a bastion of Christian civilization, with the barbarians at the gate. (On the Pomona seal were the words "Our tribute to Christian civilization," and the children of Pomona College alumni were called "tributes." The idea of a "tribute to Judeo-Christian civilization" seemed unheard of, and I don't remember many Jews among either the faculty or the student body.) At Pomona, people seemed not only to be cut off from the world but to go around thinking they were the center of the world, and no one at the college challenged that assumption. The possibility that excelling at Pomona might have little to do with excelling anywhere else seemed never to be raised. People apparently thought that part of the college's virtue lay in its distance from the chaotic surrounding society. In any event, I found the atmosphere parochial. For instance, I wasn't able to take Mr. F. L. Mulhauser's twentieth-century-novel course, because I couldn't find any reader—male or female—who was prepared to read books like D. H. Lawrence's "Women in Love" to me. (In those days, books with any sex in them were not put in Braille or on Talking Books.) Perhaps because I had grown up in the cosmopolitan British Empire and lived through one of the most politically intense moments in Indian history—the country's independence and attendant partition—and perhaps because in my time at Pomona I found myself the only Hindu, the only Indian, and the only blind person, the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place came to seem stifling in all sorts of ways. I felt that if I got to a large, cosmopolitan university I would be back in touch with the wider world. I would find more kindred spirits and feel less lonely and isolated.

Mr. Jones' reply to my letter about transferring, dated November 9th, was in his characteristically enumerative style:

> Though I shall be sorry to see you leave Pomona, I am obliged to say that I think your decision to go elsewhere to complete your B.A. is sound. I will comment on each of your five reasons.
>
> 1. I agree that there will be a real advantage for you to get to know another part of this country, and despite the leveling influences of radio and TV, there are still significant sectional differences.
>
> 2. and 3. These seem to me important considerations. You certainly should know more about the institutions and history of your own country, especially if, as you say, there will be a prejudice against you because of an Occidental education.
>
> 4. I just don't know about whether there are greater possibilities in the Eastern universities for financial support. There are certainly larger funds, but there are also greater demands. What this adds up to for you, I don't know.
>
> 5. This seems to be a minor matter; if the other reasons did not on the whole point up to a move, I would not consider reputation very seriously.

I wrote long letters to the four universities, and got strong responses from Harvard and Yale. I applied to both, telling them that I was planning to be in the East around Christmas to be with my father, a doctor, who was in this country making ends meet by lecturing and looking after a rich, eccentric patient, Mrs. Ethel Clyde. We had lost everything at the time of the Partition of India, in 1947, and, on top of that, in 1951, after my father passed the age of fifty-five—the age of mandatory retirement in the government service—he had been forced to retire from the post of deputy director-general of health services in India. I was granted an interview at Harvard on December 21st, with Mr. Henry, and at Yale on December 22nd, with Mr. Arthur Howe, Jr., acting chairman of the board of admissions.

After a thirteen-hour flight, I arrived in Boston on the day of my Harvard interview, took a taxi to Cambridge, and checked into the Continental Hotel, near Harvard Square. The accents and rhythms of speech of the people around me sounded so old-fashioned that I felt I was back in the British Raj. I felt very much at home. This is where I belong, I thought.

Now I heard my name, and jumped up. It was Mr. Henry. I gave him my hand—still cold. He took it in his own hand, which was warm, friendly, and alert. We exchanged greetings, and I followed him to his office and sat down, all the while listening closely to his voice. He seemed about thirty, and came across like an Eastern version of the prep-school type we had at Pomona—someone who was perpetually young, and was so much at ease with himself that he put other people at ease. Next to him I felt very old.

I had come prepared to talk about my reasons for wishing to transfer, about my need for financial aid, about my essay on our flight from the burning city of Lahore during the Partition, which I had written as part of my Harvard application. But Mr. Henry didn't give me a chance. He started asking questions about how I had managed to travel alone from California, and how I had found my way to University Hall. It turned out that he had never met a blind person before, and he was amazed that I could follow him from the waiting room to his office and find a chair unassisted, and that I could talk to him as naturally as if I could see. At first, my answers were offhand—I wanted him to get off the subject of blindness—but his interest seemed so genuine that I was soon explaining at some length about facial vision, about my ability to perceive the sound-shadows of objects. He was incredulous.

"If you don't believe me, sometime come out with me and we'll go bicycling," I said, surprised at my own boldness. He wanted to know more about my bicycling, and I told him about our family compound in Rawalpindi, where I had taught myself how to ride a bicycle. He seemed spellbound, and that added to my enjoyment of describing things to him.

"Do you know anything about Harvard life?" he asked.

The phrase sounded exotic, and it was now my turn to be spellbound, as he described the college's house system, its "tutor and tutee" meetings, its cultural activities, the kind of people who thrived at Harvard—the best students of traditional preparatory schools. It was clear that his loyalties were all to Harvard College, as opposed to the university at large—as if he took it for granted that the college was the crème de la crème of the various constituents of the university—and he made me feel that I would never be a Harvard man unless I went to Harvard College.

HEAVEN AND EARTH HOUSE

Three drops under the tongue—
star-of-Bethlehem, hornbeam, elm—
three 3x/day, here at the foot
of Pikes Peak, where I've come
in late December for the air,
to eat couscous and kasha,
burdock and kombu: hopes of a cure.

We are the nothing-to-lose ones,
the try-anything-once ones,
weed seeds inside our cells—
dandelion, nettle, lizard's tail—
roots sunk in, for it is the tip
that counts, reaching out to tap
new moisture. Roots, stems, leaves,
the stomata, those little mouths
opening, closing, sucking in air
in the evening when we boil
wild ginger and sleep in its vapor.
Like cures like, we hear in the morning
when we brush ourselves with
vegetable fibre in the shower,
beat ourselves with our fists.
(This is no crazier than anything else.)

In the next room, a woman has
a tumor growing on her heart—
monkshood, thistle, lion's-foot—
pressing against her windpipe.
For six weeks she has had no voice.
If she weeps, she chokes.
So in the night she wraps herself
in a quilt brought from home—
star-of-Bethlehem—and I listen
for her whistles and moans:
carrion flower, black medic.
I tap on the wall and she raps an answer.
I stare out the window at the mountain
I hike higher each day in the snow,
stones slipping under my feet.
I stare out the window into the dark—
star-of-Bethlehem, shooting star, angelica.

—MARY SWANDER

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I asked Mr. Henry what my chances for getting into the college were, my heart racing.

"You should be a shoo-in," he said.

I wasn't sure I had heard him correctly, and said as much. He referred to my academic record at Pomona and my unusual background, and repeated the term "shoo-in."

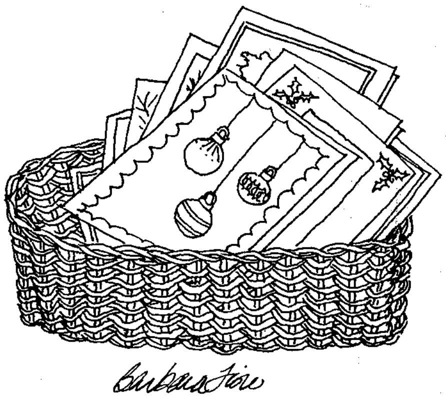
Soon Mr. Henry had a course catalogue in hand and was helping me decide which professors I might study with—Daniel Ingalls, William Langer, Archibald MacLeish, Albert Guerard. The names of some of these professors were campus bywords at Pomona. I was so impressed and awed by everything he was telling me that, compared with Harvard College, Pomona seemed like just a high school. I've always wanted to go to Harvard, I thought, but I'm now ready for it in a way I wasn't two years ago, when I finished high school in Arkansas. Because of the good teaching and small classes at Pomona, I'm better prepared. Because of the Southern California climate, I am healthier. In those days, I was so thin that my father feared I might be prone to t.b.

I didn't want to spoil the buoyant atmosphere of the interview, but years of disappointments had made me wary. So I reminded Mr. Henry that I could not possibly come to Harvard without financial aid to pay for readers, that I had dwelt on this point in my application to Harvard.

"Financial aid for transfer students in their first year is not common," he said. "We don't like other colleges to think we are trying to lure their good students away from them. But your case is very different. Your college authorities are enthusiastic about your transfer from Pomona, and your scholarship is not for ordinary Harvard expenses but for paying your readers." I could not have argued my own case better. "I'm sure in your case satisfactory arrangements will be made. If we want someone at Harvard, we don't let anything stand in our way."

He wanted to introduce me to the Dean of Admissions, Wilbur Bender, and we went upstairs to his office. Mr. Henry filled in Dean Bender—a hard-driving, gruff fellow—on our conversation. Dean Bender made kind noises about my admission and about financial aid, and asked Mr. Henry to show me one of the houses in which I might live.

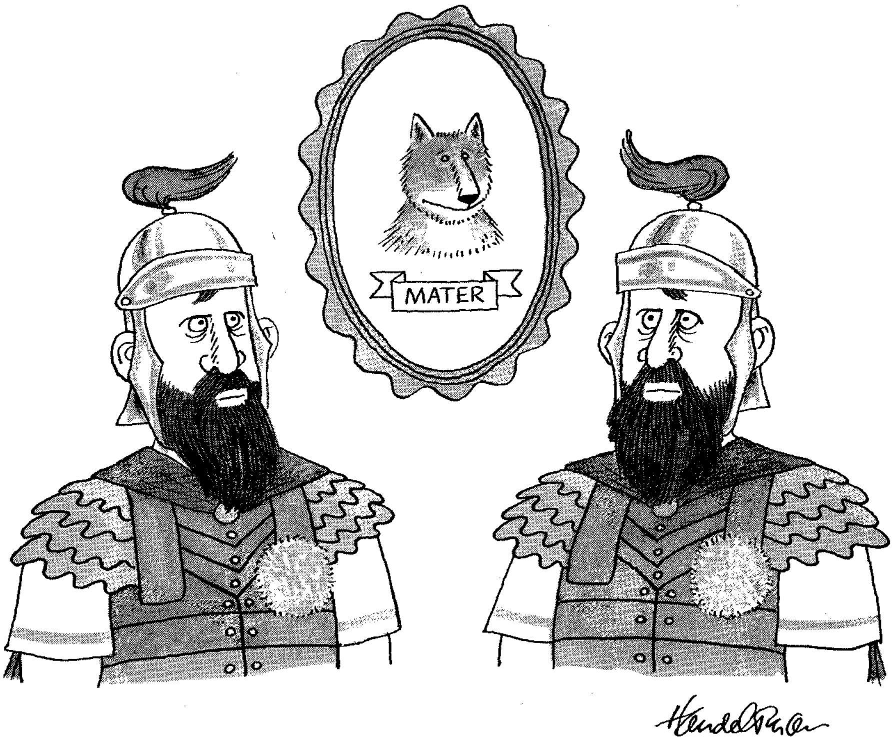
As I walked around with Mr. Henry, I could sense that he was watching me, as if to convince himself that I had facial vision, and to understand how I used it. He seemed to be full of boyish wonder at my sureness of step. When we were inside University Hall, I was able to perform with a certain amount of aplomb, but outside, in the bitter cold, my step was a little less certain. Still, the path was already familiar to me, and I walked it without so much as touching his arm.



After showing me Adams House, Mr. Henry left me on Massachusetts Avenue. As I walked along the avenue toward Harvard Square, the term "shoo-in" drummed in my head. I'm going to be a Harvard man, I thought.

At Harvard Square, I fancied for a moment that Mr. Henry was following me and was going to put his hand on my arm and help me across. I stiffened with anger. I suddenly felt tired by the effort of having to prove to him my ability to get around. On an impulse, in the renowned manner of the great Harvard man George Lyman Kittredge, I held out both my arms and marched across, heedless of whether traffic was moving or not, assuming that it was the motorists' responsibility to look out for me.

AFTER Harvard, I went to Yale and was interviewed by Mr. Howe. He, too, seemed certain of my acceptance. Then I spent a week with my father and Mrs. Clyde at Huntington, Long Island, where she had a farm. By the end of the stay, I had impetuously agreed to try to write a book with a thousand dollars that Mrs. Clyde, in her equally impetuous way, had made available to me to hire an amanuensis and spend the summer writing. While I was delighted that she was making it possible for me to try my hand at writing, I was terrified at the prospect. How did the whole business of my writing a book get started, anyway, I wondered later. It was one of my father's typical ideas, like the one that I would grow up to be another Caruso, combining Eastern melodies and Western harmonies, when I had neither the voice nor the talent nor any knowledge of Western music. But I secretly wanted to write the story of my life. I thought it would be cathartic. There was something challenging about writing a book, something not generally associated with blind people. In any event, a book would help me define myself, and win a place for me in the wider world. But there was all the difference between dreaming about writing a book and sitting down to write one.



Romulus (left) and Remus

As I thought about writing the narrative—when it came down to it, I couldn't think of what I might write as a book—it became clear to me that writing about myself would mean confessing very personal things. I couldn't think of anyone better for the delicate, intimate job of amanuensis in that situation than Johnnie Johnstone. The Pomona English Department rated her one of its best students. No one had a more sympathetic ear than she. But, more to the point, I thought that days, weeks, and months of telling her the story of my struggles might—just might—make her fall in love with me.

I had been in love with Johnnie ever since the early days of our freshman year, when I first heard her voice—kind, openhearted, pensive, beguilingly reticent, slightly ironic. There was lively but genteel laughter in it, and, at the same time, an undercurrent of sadness. In fact, I felt about her voice the way I thought I would feel about her eyes if I could see—I thought it was a window to her soul. Her diction was as clear as water, and there wasn't a hint of self-consciousness or pedantry in her speech. She was extremely intelligent but tried to hide it, so that boys wouldn't feel threatened by her. She was also an outdoors type, and went to beaches and ski lodges and on camping trips on weekends. I thought of her as an exalted, unattainable being, who was good at everything. Next to her I felt like a dullard, who stuck to his room and the library.

Johnnie had been reading to me since the start of my freshman year. We were often in the same courses and read the same books for the same classes, and we shared a spirit of camaraderie, of common enterprise, of trying to puzzle out things together—the meaning of this passage, the significance of that symbol. So I mostly saw her in the context of work. In class, she might sit next to me; if we ran into each other at the Coop, we might have a Coke together. But we always talked about books or professors or classmates; she never talked about whom she was dating, what parties she was going to, what she was doing with her weekends. I often wondered if she ever thought about me when we weren't together, as I did about her—if I appeared in her dreams, as she did in mine. But I never dared ask her. In the year and a half I had known her, I had not had the nerve to so much as whisper a word to her about my love. I had simply assumed that all true love was selfless and required lifelong sacrifice and silent devotion, that I was doomed to go through life alone, my love unrequited. I had consoled myself with the thought that as long as she went on reading to me I at least had the sound of her voice to sustain me.

Lately, Johnnie had been reading to me, for an English course, tales of knights-errant jousting for their ladies and going on quests for the Holy Grail. I had been inspired by the tales, and started having all kinds of bizarre fantasies about her setting me ordeals for winning her. In one, she banished me to a forest, where for years I would have to live on roots and berries. But now I saw in the book project a glimmer of hope—hope for my love. Also, since I would be going to Harvard in the fall I felt that sooner or later I would have to declare myself to her, stake everything. Otherwise, I would live with a sense of regret all my life, wondering what would have happened if I had made my feelings known.

Soon after we got back from our Christmas vacation, I stopped Johnnie a few minutes before the end of a reading session and told her about the project and broached the subject of her being my amanuensis for the summer, at the same time apologizing for the strangeness of the idea.

"Gee, Ved, writing a book with you—I'd like nothing better. But I'm afraid I couldn't possibly do it. I have

MERRY CHRISTMAS
Joseph Farris

"Who hired him?"

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to go back and be with my mother in Seattle."

"I'll come to Seattle and we can work there," I said, without a moment's hesitation.

She seemed startled. "Seattle? You don't know anyone there. How could you possibly manage alone?"

"I know you. I'll get an apartment."

"Have you ever lived in an apartment by yourself?"

"No."

"What would you do for food?"

I was stumped for a second. I had never so much as boiled an egg. But I had eaten alone in restaurants, so I said, "I'll eat in restaurants."

"But you've never been to Seattle. How will you find your way around?"

"Perhaps you could show me about once. I learn very fast. Besides, I'll be working all the time."

"If that's what you want to do, I'll be happy to do it." Her voice suddenly became animated. "You'll dictate and I'll write. We'll be working on an actual book—think of that! And if you got a real apartment, with a kitchen, I could cook a little bit for you and we could have lunch together—break up a long day of work with lunch, you know."

In all the time I had known her, I had not had even a sandwich with her, and the thought of standing around the kitchen while she cooked—in an informal way, without the time limit of a reading session—took my breath away. I realized in a flash, as when the meaning of an elusive dream suddenly becomes clear, that I couldn't write the narrative with anyone but her. Not only did she have an understanding heart but she was the only person whose literary judgment I trusted, who could tell me after a paragraph whether it was sense or nonsense. Above all, I would have the feeling that I was addressing my words to her. In the course of the summer, I would have a chance to prove my worth to her. Then I remembered Richard Hungate, a wholesome, tall, popular guy, whom she was dating, and realized, with deep sadness, that I could never measure up to him. I felt depressed but told myself there were instances in books of perfectly sensible, desirable women falling in love with hunchbacks and the like.

"No, I really couldn't accept the job," she was saying.

"What? Why not?"

"I couldn't accept money from you, and I need to earn money over the summer to help pay my tuition."

"The money part you honestly don't have to worry about," I said, finally. "I have a cache of a thousand dollars that I can use only for this project. My only problem is where I'll stay when I first arrive in Seattle."

"Oh, that's not a problem. I'll write and ask my mother if you can stay with us until you find a place," she said matter-of-factly.

The thought of meeting her mother was so staggering that I felt an attack of abdominal pain. I put my handkerchief to my face and pretended I had a sneeze coming.

THE abdominal attacks had started early in November, and they gave no sign of abating. In March, I finally got myself to the college clinic. I was seen by one of the college doctors, a bumbling, good-natured, slow-witted man, who examined me as I stood in his office, and diagnosed first appendicitis and then pancreas or gallbladder trouble. He gave me a slip of paper, and I went to the hospital in the nearby town of Pomona and had some X-rays done. A few days later, the college doctor informed me that they had turned up nothing. "The pressures of college work can bring on such pain," he said. "Try to forget it."

But the pain didn't go away, and a few weeks later I went back to the clinic. This time, the doctor had me get a stool test done, and informed me afterward that I had intestinal parasites. I took the medicine he prescribed, but with no better results.

During that period, I was reading

Marcus Aurelius' "Meditations" for a course and had come under the spell of his philosophy of endurance, temperance, justice, and wisdom, and his example of total immersion in work and duty. His principle of stoic endurance had a special effect on me, and I began to regard my abdominal pain as my own test of stoicism. "Hundreds of years ago Sophocles and Marcus Aurelius, and recently Arnold Toynbee, have given expression to a single truth, that man grows through suffering," I wrote to my father. "This truth has been enshrined in art, music, literature—in all of human experience. I articulate this lofty sentiment because it is a tenet of my credology." ("Credology" was a word I had just learned, and I used it at every opportunity.)

Some entries in a journal I had been keeping:

February 12

Today President Lyon announced at the college convocation that I had led all the Pomona sophomores in grades. Daddy will be so proud of me.

March 1

I got a letter today from Dean Bender. He says he thinks Harvard can make such arrangements to get me a scholarship to pay readers, but I have to decide immediately between Harvard and Yale. In other words, they don't want to put in time on my behalf if in the end I wouldn't be coming there.

March 8

I have withdrawn my application from Yale. After thorough consideration, I decided to stake all my chances on Harvard. Now I just hope I'll get into Harvard or I'll really be crushed.

April 19

I've finally heard from Harvard. Dean Bender is prepared to admit me, but he wanted to know if I would still like to come there if Harvard was not able to give me a scholarship to pay for readers. Transferring to Harvard without a scholarship to pay readers would mean that I would be constantly aware that the book I was reading was costing me money that I would need for clothes or food. Without hesitation I wrote to him today that I would not. The Clyde fund and what Daddy could supplement would barely cover the cost of tuition, board, and room. [Mrs. Clyde had made a one-time gift for my education.] For me, it would be like going to the university without being able to study.

June 2

I still have not heard from Harvard about a scholarship for readers. It seems that Dean Bender and Mr. Henry go on being worried about my ability to get around Harvard, "adjust to a new environment." I don't know what it'll take to convince them that I want to transfer. I've written them yet again telling them that readjustment and "reorientation" will not present a problem for me.

June 7

I'm off to Seattle to work with enchanting Johnnie on my narrative. I'm full of trepidation. This is a new word I've learned from reading Virginia Woolf, and it expresses what I'm feeling exactly.

Johnnie received me at the train station in the rain, and we took a taxi to her house. She showed me to a room in the basement, where I was to stay until I found a place of my own. Her father, who worked in the traffic department of the Southern Pacific Railroad, arrived, and she went upstairs to greet him.

Seattle seemed to be a wet place, with a perpetual chill in the air. I couldn't stop trembling. My two years in sunny California have destroyed my tolerance for cold weather, I thought. I'd better get a grip on myself. I tried to relax my muscles and breathe slowly.

"Come up and meet Bob and Betty!" Johnnie called down to me.

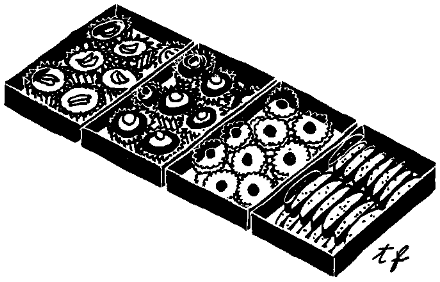
I had never heard Johnnie refer to her parents as Bob and Betty before, and was surprised. But then I remembered I'd heard her speak about her parents only three or four times in the two years I'd known her—and then mostly about her mother.

I climbed the stairs, trying to master my nervousness. I followed Johnnie to the back yard, and there she introduced me to her parents. We all sat down, and Mr. Johnstone said, "The Kirkland lights look especially pretty on the lake tonight."

Without meaning to, he's calling Johnnie's attention to my not being able to see, I thought. I said, "I thought Johnnie told me your house had a view of Mt. Rainier."

"Mt. Rainier is part of the Cascade range, but it's to the south, and we're facing east," Johnnie said. "Mt. Rainier always seems to be surrounded by clouds. We only see it when the sun comes out, and that's rarely."

Wanting to get onto a different subject, I remarked that calling parents by their first names was something unheard of in India. "It sounds so progressive."



"I suppose her calling us by our first names is a sign of the times she grew up in," Mrs. Johnstone said. "In those days, we parents wanted to be pals with our children."

"We still do," Mr. Johnstone said.

Johnnie laughed.

"Also, I think Johnnie first started calling Bob Bob because he was not her natural father," Mrs. Johnstone said hesitantly. "Her real father died in a car accident when she wasn't even two. When Bob and I got married, she was just short of four."

So Johnnie grew up without her own father, I thought. Maybe that's why she sometimes sounds so sad. I wanted to hear more about Johnnie's father but didn't know how to ask about him. So I said, rather awkwardly, something about how euphonious the name Johnnie Johnstone sounded.

"I gave Johnnie my name and brought her up like my own child," Mr. Johnstone said.

Mrs. Johnstone stood up and said that some time back she had seen a recipe for a lamb curry in the newspaper. It had looked complicated and challenging, but she'd cut the recipe out and tried the curry. She and Mr. Johnstone had liked it so much that she had decided to make it for my first meal in Seattle.

I said I was honored.

She and Johnnie went into the house. Within a few moments, the smell of spices drifted into the back yard. I began to relax and feel more like myself.

In the morning, after breakfast, Johnnie and her mother started pulling weeds in the back yard. I asked them for the phone number for a taxi, so I could go look for an apartment.

"Do you think you can manage on your own?" Mrs. Johnstone asked.

"He's very independent," Johnnie said.

I was so hellbent on getting out of the house without a fuss that it was only when I got into the taxi that I wondered if I should have asked the Johnstones for help. The only lead I had was to try the student-housing office of the University of Washington. The people there assigned me a student escort, and before the morning ended I had found a place to live. It was cheap, small, and easy to take care of, and had all the essentials—a bed, a table, two chairs, a stove, and a small refrigerator. Moreover, it was within reach of many student-type restaurants and a laundromat, and was near the university library. (There was a lot of political stuff about the Partition which I needed to check for the narrative.)

I went back to Johnnie's house for lunch, and after that she and I got into a taxi with my suitcase. She was coming along because I wanted her to see her place of work. It was Friday. The arrangement was for her to begin Monday morning at nine and work eight hours a day, six days a week. I proudly gave the driver my address—"1406 East Northlake, please"—feeling very much a man of the world, especially with Johnnie there to hear me.

"The apartment is so dark and damp," Johnnie said as soon as we walked in. "Why did you decide on a basement apartment?"

"It was cheap and efficient and near the university," I said, with a sinking heart. Above all, I had wanted her to like it.

"Good writing has certainly been done in garrets," she said cheerfully. "This isn't a garret, but maybe this is as close as you can get in Seattle."

Johnnie arrived at nine on Monday, bright and energetic.

"I hope you didn't have too much trouble getting here," I said, not quite knowing what to say.

"Not at all. It's a very easy half-hour bus ride from my house."

She took a chair at the table, which I'd set up in the middle of the apartment, and started rearranging a sheaf of blank paper and my American College Dictionary and thesaurus. I sat down across from her. "What are we going to write today?" she asked.

I had an almost paralyzing dread of writing and of Johnnie's sitting in judgment on what I wrote. I had an attack of abdominal pain. The pain was so excruciating that I could hardly prevent my face from contorting. I had spent all weekend worrying about how to keep the pain secret from Johnnie. I was afraid that if she found out that on top of everything else I was sickly there wouldn't be a hope in hell of her ever falling in love with me. I'd come to find any physical infirmity embarrassing, not only my own but that of anyone else. It was part of my fantasy that I had no physical imperfection—that, in fact, I could see. Besides, I was afraid that if she came to know about my attacks she would feel responsible for getting me to a doctor. There would be more X-rays and tests, and maybe hospitalization. That would mean the loss of valuable working time, and, for Johnnie, a loss of income she was counting on to help with college the following year. I was sure she would never accept money from me unless she had done a good day's work for it, and if she didn't make enough money she might have to leave me for another job. I couldn't allow any personal problem to compromise the professional nature of our relationship, which I felt had to be pure—especially so since I felt guilty about my secret reason for hiring her in the first place. But how was I to go about hiding the pain from someone who was as sensitive as she was and would be closeted with me in one room, day in and day out, from nine to five?

"Do you have any letters or papers?" she asked helpfully. "We could go through them, and maybe that would get you started."

I told her that in the spring I had written to various English and American schools—like the Perkins Institution for the Blind, with which I had carried on a voluminous correspondence from India about admission—and asked if they had our correspondence on file and if I could see it. But I had got mostly perfunctory replies, saying they had very little or nothing.

"Didn't you save any of their letters to you?"

"When I finally got to America, I burned them. I didn't want to carry around the miserable record of my rejections."

"What did the letters say?"

Many of the schools had been afraid that by admitting me they would be contributing to my "cultural maladjustment," but I couldn't tell her that, couldn't bring myself to utter the dreaded phrase. It had continued to determine my fate. Against the advice of the school authorities, I had come out of my country when I was fifteen—in my most formative and impressionable years, as they called them—and now, at the age of twenty, I felt, as they had predicted, that I belonged to neither East nor West, to neither India nor America. Often when I got depressed, I would think back to the letters and wonder if the authorities hadn't been right after all. Yet how could I tell her any of that? I wanted her to think of me as strong and manly, well adjusted, and in command. I couldn't even bring myself to tell her about my journal, which I had typed myself on and off since I was fifteen, and which I had with me; the mere thought of exposing to her scrutiny my private maunderings in mangled English was mortifying.

"Those letters said a lot of different things."

"Maybe it's just as well that you don't have documents. You might end up writing an essay, and what you really want to do is write a story. I suppose you'll have to rely on the inside of your head, like other writers," Johnnie said.

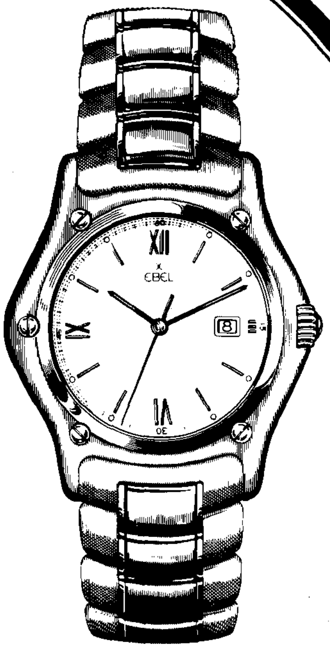
The inside of my head. *It's an autobiography. Begin with birth.* I can't think of more than a sentence about that. Who can? *Begin with going blind. That's an important theme.* I don't know much more than that I had meningitis and lost my sight. What else is there to say about it? *Begin with your father.* I wish he were here to give me the background. I don't know any of the facts. *Just write your memories of him, memories of your mother.* I need more information, more guidance. *Just begin, begin anywhere.* Johnnie won't like it. She'll laugh at me. *You have no choice.* I can't. *Just start writing a scene.*

I looked at my watch. A good hour had gone by, and I didn't have a single sentence on paper. The idea of sitting there, letting her see that I was not in command, not to mention spending Mrs. Clyde's money without having anything to show for it, began to prey upon me.

"My father came home one day and shouted at my mother, 'Your superstitions will be the end of our family,' " I began. Johnnie's pen moved abruptly, as if in syncopation with my words. "He had a fierce temper, and she had long since learned to bear it silently. She now said nothing. 'Don't you have a tongue in your head?' She started weeping. 'Whatever you say,' she said, still not knowing whether she was doing the right thing in opening her mouth."

I wrote on, mesmerized by the sound of my voice, with the illusion that I was alone, with a near silence to encourage my thoughts. Johnnie wrote so quickly that now and again the pen seemed to fly off the page and then return to it with a little tap, as if she were trying to discipline it. In college, when my regular amanuensis, the matronly and utterly sympathetic Miss Rietveld, was not available, I often had to dictate to people who interrupted, shifted in their chairs, shuffled papers, tapped their feet, chewed gum, smoked cigarettes, played with their hair, coughed, chattered on—assaulted my ears in a hundred ways. I would tell them that such sounds were as jarring to me as someone constantly flashing light in their eyes would be to them, but that would only start an argument. They would say things like what was I trying to do—stop them from breathing and living so I could get my work done? I should learn to adjust. In contrast, Johnnie was so quiet and attentive that I was aware of her presence only from the reassuring sound of her pen forming words on the page. Even if I hadn't been in love with her, I could have embraced her for her instinctive understanding of my needs.

"He finally sat down and started unlacing his shoes," I wrote on. "She heaved a sigh of relief. Another storm had passed." As I continued with the scene, which my mother had often enacted for my brothers and sisters and me to tell us what a fierce temper our father had in the early years of their marriage, things came rushing to mind which I didn't even know I had inside my head. The pain of dictating abated, my face relaxed; I forgot the sound of my voice and entered a trancelike state, Johnnie's hand and pen somehow magically moving to my words, thrilling me, making me feel I'd taken com-



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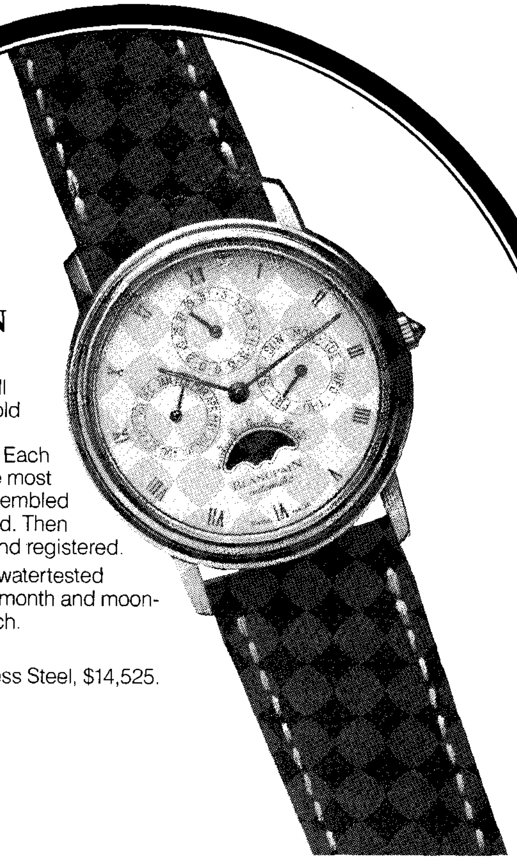

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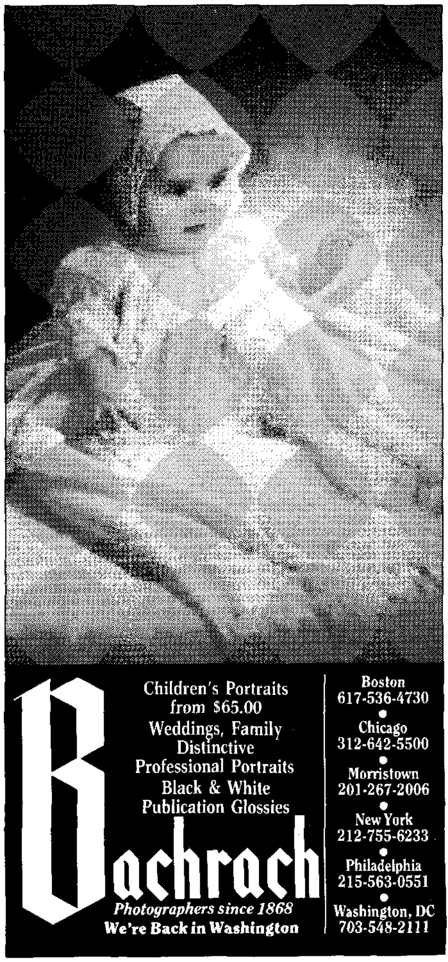

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mand of the narrative and, by extension, of her sympathies.

By the end of the week, I was freely uttering the phrase "cultural maladjustment" and writing anecdotes irrespective of how they made me look in Johnnie's eyes. My reticence about the work yielded to the necessity of working.

I OFTEN imagined during that time what I would do if I didn't have the pressure of Johnnie's constant presence, if I could write by myself. I imagined that I would spend much of the day in bed, daydreaming, reading, sleeping, fretting about not writing, waiting for inspiration, making frequent trips to the refrigerator, inventing errands to run—generally avoiding sitting down to write. But with Johnnie there, her pen poised, waiting for my words to write down, my pride was engaged. If for five minutes I couldn't think of something to write, I would think, I'm stupid. She'll think I'm stupid. I could almost feel the tightening of the screw—one more turn, I thought, and I will die for the lack of anything to write—but then, suddenly, the words would come tripping out of my mouth, and soon I would have a sentence, a paragraph, sometimes a whole scene. Yet just because I managed to get through an hour seemed to be no assurance that I would be able to get through the next one. The whole process was mysterious. In fact, the psychological insecurity seemed central to the process—it drove me on. I came to think that my only hope of conquering Johnnie's heart lay in sheer exertion and total discipline.

Sometimes in the middle of a sentence I would get an attack. I would cover my face with a handkerchief, as if I needed to blow my nose. The attack would pass, and I would doggedly go on dictating.

During the two and a half months Johnnie worked for me, I tried to keep to the invisible professional line that had been drawn the first day. Although she cooked me dozens of lunches—mostly hamburgers—and I dictated to her hundreds of pages, our relationship remained essentially formal, confined to the work at hand. I felt honor-bound not to compromise my work and her good opinion of me. I kept my fantasies about her to myself.

The hardest part of the day came when Johnnie left, at five. The evenings and Sundays stretched ahead of me, empty. I would long for the company of my college friends. I wished I were anywhere but in godforsaken Seattle, where, aside from the Johnstones, I knew nobody. Johnnie herself was new to Seattle and didn't seem to have any close friends—at least, she never mentioned them. Even if she had, I would have wanted her to have a complete break from me after spending eight hours a day, six days a week immersed in the details of my life.

As soon as she had closed the door behind her, I would slump on the bed, my arms under my head, exhausted by the effort of trying to impress Johnnie. I would clock in my head her bus ride home, imagine her in her hillside house, puttering about in her kitchen, tending to flowers and weeds in the back yard, or looking at the lights on the lake, and get depressed about lying in my one-room utility apartment, as inert as a sack of potatoes. I would, however, stay awake by force of will, because I had a rock-firm conviction that if I didn't have a good dinner and an uninterrupted night's sleep I would not be able to write the next day. So, no matter how tired I felt after two or three hours of lying about, I would comb my hair, put on a tie and jacket, and go out to one of the two or three restaurants nearby where the waiters had got to know my independent ways. I would usually be given the same table and have more or less the same dish—fish or steak—then finish off with fruit salad, and return to my apartment. Now and again, I would come upon some festivity in the streets, like the annual Sailors' Snake Dance, and I would join in. But sooner or later I would be shouldered aside, as if I were only in the way of people's revelry. I usually just went back to my apartment, read, and fell asleep. In the morning, I would shave and dress, have a glass of milk and a plain doughnut, and wait for Johnnie.

The abdominal attacks became more severe, and I was sure that their severity was connected with the pressure of writing. During the first few weeks in Seattle, I ignored the attacks. Then, by discreetly making inquiries at the university, I found a well-known specialist in gastrointestinal disorders, a Dr. Mills, and went to see him after work. There were more tests, and his diagnosis was that I still had several kinds of intestinal parasites. He gave me strong medicines, which did succeed in controlling the severity of the attacks but also made me drowsy for a good part of the day. I kept on hoping the attacks would go away, and when they didn't I went back to Dr. Mills. "Tell me the very worst, Dr. Mills," I demanded. "I've seen many doctors and had all kinds of tests and X-rays, and they've done me no good. I want to know if I'm going to have these pains for the rest of my life."

He laughed. He had a comfortable office, and he radiated an air of competence and efficiency. He was also very kindly; he refused to accept payment from me. "Of course you'll be rid of the attacks," he said. "You have no parasites now. But I think the trouble is that all of us have been going at this piecemeal. What we need to have done is a full-scale barium-enema study. If that doesn't turn up anything, you'll have to enter a hospital for a few days of observation."

My remaining time in Seattle was short, and I asked him if the study he recommended could wait until the autumn, when I would be back at college.

"It's a standard study," he said. "It can be done anywhere."

"THIS is a letter from Dean Bender at Harvard," Johnnie said. "I hate to read it to you."

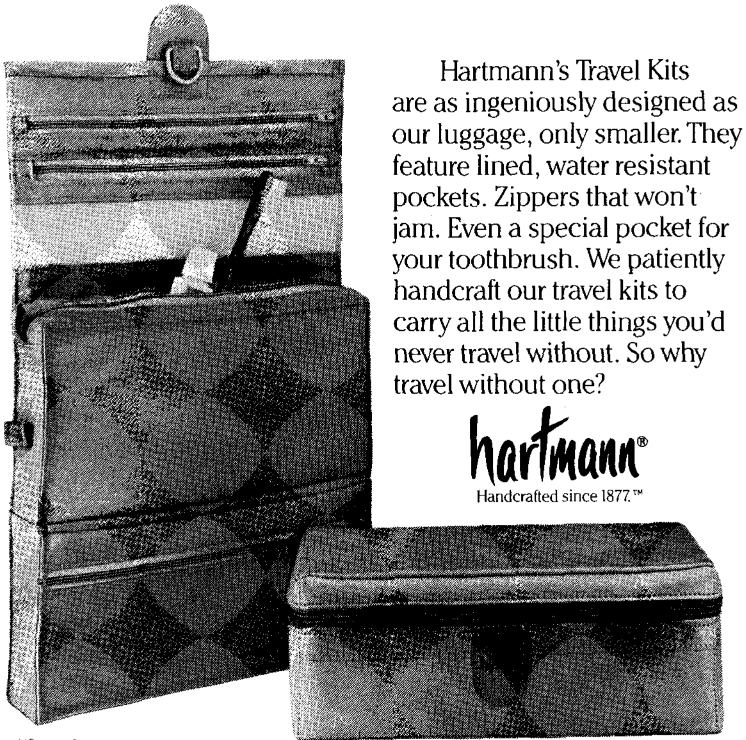
"Oh, no."

She read the letter. It was nice and polite. He and his colleagues wished they could agree with me that I should come to Harvard, but I had to remember that I was blind, and it would be difficult for me to adjust to a new environment. They realized they had admitted me in April, but my admission had been conditional on financial aid for my readers. That was simply not possible. The committee on admissions had my best interests at heart. He and Mr. Henry had very much enjoyed meeting me. They wished me well.

I sat there, numb. Just the night before, I had written to my father that I was sure to go to Harvard; the committee on admissions couldn't keep me dangling on a string until August and then reject me.

"What are you thinking?" Johnnie asked.

"Oh, nothing," I said, trying to sound normal. So I'll have to go back to Pomona, I thought. I have to put the best face on it, and tell her it's all for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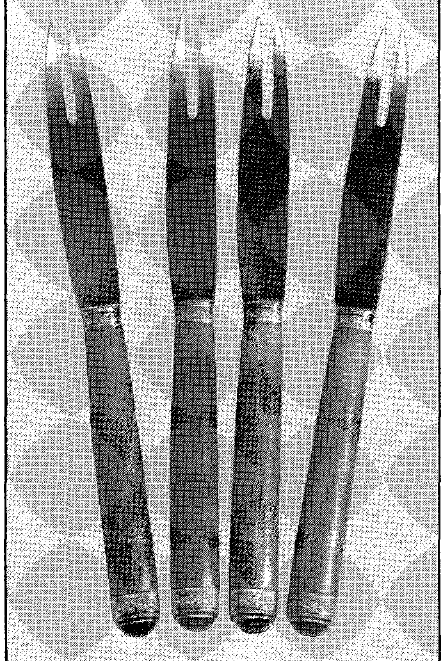

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the best. She knows that I like the California sun, that it's an advantage to stay in a place where one has friends and knows professors.

"Isn't it too bad?"

"Not really. It may be a blessing in disguise." It was a cliché my father often used.

Near the end of my stay in Seattle, as I was dictating to Johnnie about bicycling in Rawalpindi she asked, "You really can ride a bicycle?"

"Of course I can. I have sometimes ridden around Claremont on a bicycle late at night."

"But how?"

"Maybe you and I can go for a ride together and I'll show you." I suddenly thought that by making such a suggestion I might have overstepped the bounds of our relationship, and added, "I mean, if I'm riding in the streets where there's a lot of traffic I like someone to go ahead of me. It's easier that way." Even as I started imagining going bicycling with her like any ordinary person, I began to fret that if she came up with a couple of bicycles and expected me to ride one in town I might take a spill and disgrace myself, and said, "Of course, I prefer to ride where there's not much traffic."

So far, she has known me only in the context of reading or writing, I thought. If she does come bicycling with me, she may see me in a different light. An outdoor girl like her needs a demonstration of physical prowess. After all, she goes hiking in the mountains practically every Sunday. I found myself boasting, "You know, I used to ride without hands, sometimes with my little brother, Ashok, on the handlebars."

It was clear she was impressed. But she said, "I don't know anybody here who has a bicycle."

"Maybe we could rent a couple," I said insistently.

My opportunity to show off came a couple of days later, when we found out about a place around Green Lake where one could rent bicycles, and about a bicycle path around the lake. We decided to knock off on a Friday afternoon and go bicycling.

The bicycle path proved to be very narrow, but I had no difficulty riding on it. I sat straight in my seat, my hands resting lightly on the handlebars. Johnnie rode just a few feet ahead of me, talking to me as naturally as if we were in my apartment. I raised myself off the seat and put on some speed. I wanted to pass her and give her a demonstration of how well I could handle a bicycle.

"Hey—are you trying to race me, or something?" she said, pedalling faster.

Perhaps because it was a weekday, the path seemed fairly free of bicycles, and I shot past her, saying, "Why not?"

She laughed and raced after me, but I pedalled hard and managed to keep ahead of her. I felt rejuvenated. For once, I was not cooped up with her in a confined space, with a strict regimen. I was out in the open; the air was misty and fresh.

Johnnie passed me. "How do you feel?"

"I feel as if there was nothing between the lake and Puget Sound except the two of us."

She dropped back, as if she were embarrassed by what I had said. I slowed down, and soon we were riding side by side.

"You know, Green Lake"—she was out of breath, almost panting—"is a great place for water recreation. People over there are riding on a water cycle."

Oh, God—no matter how well you learn something, there's always something better to learn, I thought. "I want to try one."

She wasn't sure it was such a good idea, but I cajoled her, and soon we were both on the water, riding on a water cycle.

I couldn't get over the ingenious contraption under us—pontoons on either side, a handle and a rudder for steering, and paddles that somehow turned and propelled it forward. I found it much harder to bicycle in the water than on the road, and after a few minutes I felt exhausted. It was getting near five anyway. We paid for the water cycle. Johnnie walked with me to the door of my apartment and hurried away to catch her bus.

A day or two after the Green Lake outing, we went to "Uncle Vanya," which was being performed at the Showboat, a paddle-wheel steamer that sat on concrete blocks in Portage Bay and was used as a theatre.

On the way, I held her hand. It was her right hand, the hand that had taken down my words the whole sum-

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mer long, the words really addressed to her heart.

We were on the bridge that connected the land with the boat. We were early, and the bridge was empty. I walked with a jaunty step. The bridge had a little give to it, which made me feel light-headed, as if I'd left Seattle and its concerns behind. I felt reckless and happy, and I decided to tell her what had been in my heart for nearly two years. I felt I owed it to my love for her to take the gamble, seize the moment; God knew when I would get another chance, when I would be alone with her again without a desk between us. In any case, her job with me was nearly over. She had made the money she needed for her college year. If my telling her made it impossible for us to work together—well, that would not be the end of the world for her.

"Johnnie—" I began. Her hand stiffened. I broke off. I swallowed hard and said quickly, "Isn't it interesting that Chekhov should have been trained as a doctor?"

The summer—the summer with Johnnie, the summer of writing, the summer of being marooned in a city of lonely sailors, as I thought of it—came to an end at that moment on the bridge, with the stiffening of her hand. Somehow, at that instant I sensed that my dream of one day being able to make her love me would always remain a dream. I felt sure that when we got back to college she would not read for me and would generally avoid me—and, indeed, that was what happened.

ONE of the first things I did when I got back from Seattle was to follow up on Dr. Mills' suggestion that I get a barium-enema study done. I went to see a Dr. Lewis Vadheim, in the town of Pomona. He examined the thick file of reports of tests, X-rays, and doctors' notes which I carried from doctor to doctor, and arranged for a full-scale study. In late November, he gave me his diagnosis, which was that my appendix was swollen and should be removed.

"Is it an emergency? Does it have to be done right now?" I asked.

"No, but you shouldn't delay it unduly."

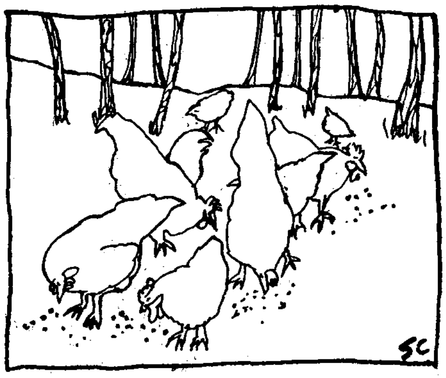
I told Dr. Vadheim that I was prepared to have the operation just after Christmas, but I remained confused by the various diagnoses; for instance, I didn't know whether I had ever had intestinal parasites. I asked him if he would write to my father, as one doctor to another. I could no longer keep the attacks secret from him: since I was a minor, Dr. Vadheim required my father's permission for the operation.

Dr. Vadheim dictated a detailed letter to my father, recommending an appendectomy, but, because of money and insurance problems, the operation was not performed until March.

I was in the hospital for two days and in the college infirmary three days. The stitches were taken out on the sixth day. The doctors reported that my appendix was unusually long—some eight inches—and that they had found a stone at the base of it. I concluded that the pain had been caused all along by a chronic case of appendicitis. In any event, I was finally free of the pain that I had lived with for over a year.

DURING most of that school year, I spent a lot of time with my close friend Kaizo Kubo, whom everyone called K. Students generally studied in the library until it closed, at ten. By then, many of us were famished—dinner was served to us at five-thirty—but there was no place open in Claremont to get a snack. K had a rickety old family car, and I often met him in front of the library to drive to the nearest takeout place, which was about twelve miles away. We would pick up hamburgers and sodas, and go back to my room and eat and talk.

Although K was reluctant to talk about himself, I gradually learned about him through snatches of conversation. His parents had come to America from Japan in steerage in the twenties. They had found work in California as day laborers, picking and packing fruit. K was born in San Diego in 1928. A few months after Pearl Harbor, when he was fourteen, he, his parents, and his three sisters were "evacuated" and interned in a temporary restriction center in Santa Anita. From there they were transported to a relocation camp in Poston, Arizona. K never liked to talk about this time, except to explain why his education had been so interrupted. "Sure, we had classes, at Parker Valley High School, in the camp," he told me. "But they were mostly out in the open, and we never did very much. We couldn't—the atmosphere was so bad. I don't remember anyone in the camp who was sympathetic to the Japanese side, but as long as we had Japanese blood in us we were all suspect. I actually used to think the Americans would kill me, but I prayed for their victory. I don't bear any grudge against America—if the Japanese had been in the Americans' shoes they would have been much crueller."



In 1946, K was separated from his family and went to work as a houseboy for an American family, the Lundstroms, in Monticello, Indiana. They gave him the name George and eventually arranged for his schooling, entering him in the twelfth grade at New Trier High School, in Winnetka, Illinois. After finishing high school, K wandered around the country for some time doing odd jobs—washing dishes, hawking newspapers, setting up pins in a bowling alley. Then he went to Reedley, a city in the San Joaquin Valley, in central California, where his family had settled. For the next six months, he worked alongside his father, picking tomatoes under the hot sun. He hated manual labor and ran away. He ended up at McPherson College, in McPherson, Kansas. After a semester there, he returned to his family in Reedley to work as a day laborer for two and a half years.

Soon after his father died, in 1950, when K was twenty-two, he resumed his studies, this time at Reedley Junior College. To help pay for them he had many part-time jobs, in the fields and on the campus. "In America, there's dignity to manual labor," he told me. "And here I was able at least to go to college. In Japan, with my family so poor, I would probably never have been able to finish high school."

In 1951, K visited Stanford as a member of his college's delegation to an annual Model United Nations, organized by colleges and universities in three Western states to teach students about the ideals and the workings of the United Nations. There he was so dazzled by the performance of the delegation from Pomona—until then he had not heard of the college—that he decided to apply to it as a junior-year transfer student. In his application for financial assistance he gave three thousand six hundred dollars as his family's total income, made up of his mother's income as a fruit packer, an older sister's income as a secretary in the Psychology and Philosophy Department of Fresno State College, and his own part-time and summer employment. He received a full-tuition grant of six hundred and fifty dollars. He still had to come up with as much again for room and board, and he somehow managed.

I had first met K in the autumn of 1952, at the freshman-orientation dinner, in Frary Hall. About a half-dozen of us new students had just got our trays and sat down at a table with our sponsor, a sort of big brother.

"Can each one of you say a little about yourself?" our sponsor said to us.

The fellow next to me began, hesitantly, "I have a difficult name—Kaizo Kubo—so people generally call me K. I am twenty-four years old. I'm a junior at Pomona. I'm a transfer student from Reedley Junior College." He paused, as if considering something, and added, "I'm a nisei—in case some of you don't know, niseis are Americans of Japanese parentage."

I was immediately taken with him. He was older and seemed different. He spoke with intensity and simplicity. I even detected a certain eagerness in him—as if, like me, he were trying to make up for things he had missed out on.

All the time I knew K, he worried about money. He worried that his widowed mother had to go on working to help pay his college expenses. "Fruit packing is seasonal employment, so most of her income comes from working in the onion fields," he said. "I hate to see her pulling onions day after day. She's such a frail old woman." He smoked a great deal and worried about the expense of his habit. Sometimes, to get some cigarette money, he would have to make a special trip to Los Angeles to see another of his sisters, who worked there as a secretary. "She has got so used to my turning to her for cigarette money that when I go to see her she just slips it into my pocket so that I won't feel embarrassed," K said. "In Japan, a man would never accept money from a sister. You know, I should be helping my mother and sisters, and I'm not giving any of them a cent."

When I returned to Pomona for my sophomore year, K came back for his senior year. The first time I saw him, he told me, "I pulled onions alongside Mother for eight, ten hours a day. It's terrible work. I told her that I don't want her to work anymore, that the moment I graduate I'm going to get a job and support her."

All along, he had thought that he would like to teach history in a public high school. But when he discussed the idea with Henry Cord Meyer, the professor he admired most in his department, Meyer said, "In the first place, you can't teach in public school here without teaching credentials. To get them, you would have to take a whole year of education courses after graduation. And I don't need to tell you that education courses are a complete waste of time. In the second place, even if you got teaching credentials you would have trouble getting a job. Public schools are looking for all-American-type teachers, and as soon as they knew you were a Japanese-American they'd have no interest in you. Private schools don't require teaching credentials, but they have their own snobberies that would stand in your way. K, you have a good mind—you should go straight for a Ph.D. in history. That way, you'll be able to teach in a good four-year college, and you won't encounter prejudice. I'll help you get fellowships to good graduate schools to see you through."

Although most better students at the college went on to graduate or professional schools, a Ph.D. had been, until then, about the last thing K had considered going in for. But after his talk with Meyer he said to me, "If he has that much faith in me, I can't disappoint him."

He began applying to history Ph.D. programs everywhere, and Meyer wrote letters for him. In K's year, the competition for graduate fellowships in history wasn't particularly stiff. There were only a couple of other serious students the department was sponsoring for fellowships. One of them got a big fellowship to study in the East, another one a big fellowship to go abroad. But K got only one acceptance,

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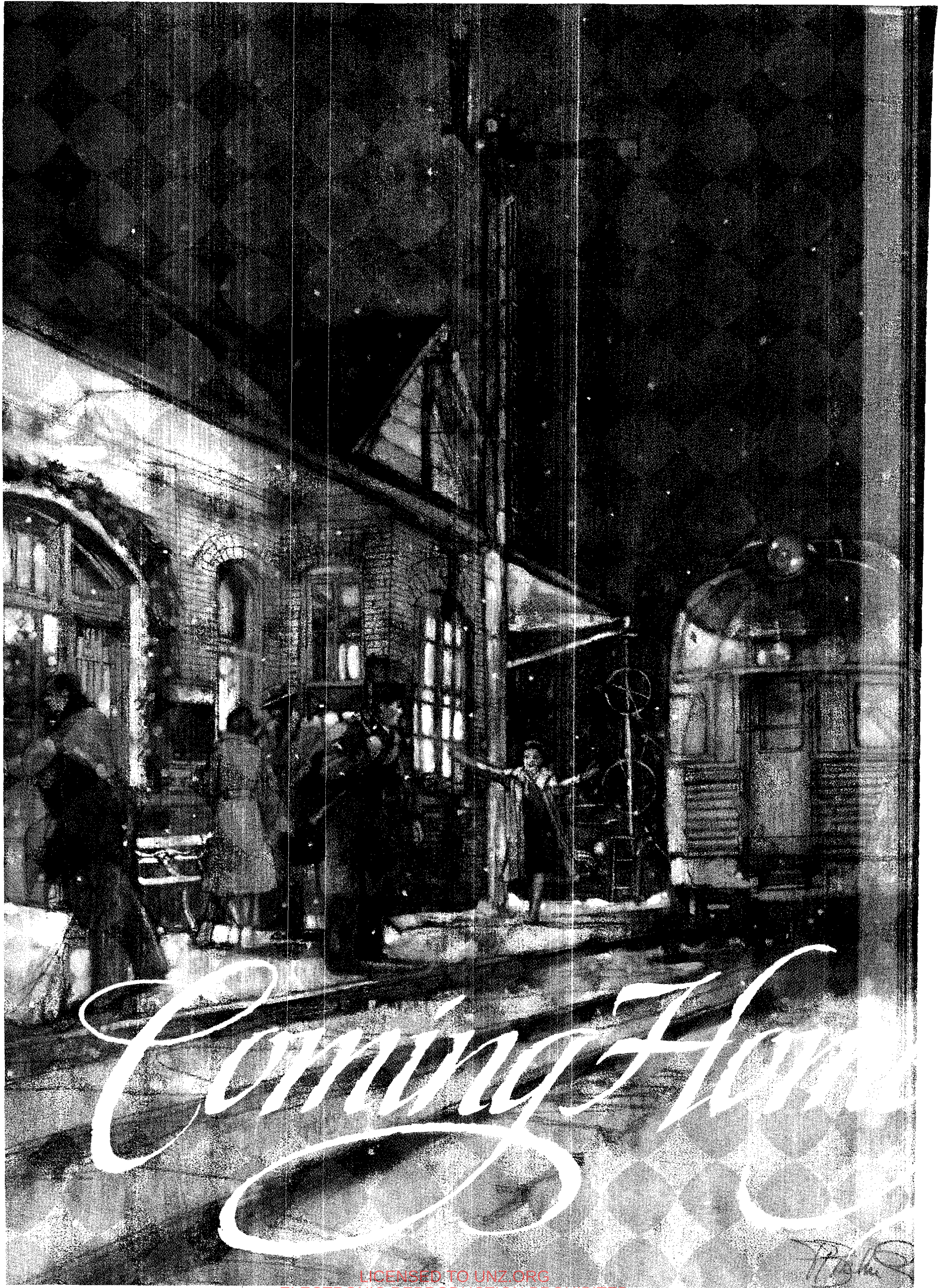
Coming Hom

The cynic tells us "You can't go home again."

We nod, but we also smile.
We know that home is not for *going* to; it is for *coming* to from wherever we've been.

Yet, in the past several decades, our goings have far exceeded our comings. To what purpose we seldom ask.

As a nation, we've gone to the ends of the earth in the name of discovery. In pursuit of peace. To deliver compassion.

As individuals, driven by whatever demons, we have chased fortune in an endless to-and-from "busy-ness" that clogs our interstates, our inner city airports, and pollutes the very air we breathe.

Lately, though—or do we just imagine it?—while the traipse through airports, and the push through tollgates continues apace—the thrill of the chase has lost much of its voltage.

It is as though we are waking up to the need for more frequent homecomings. To still the pulse. To order the mind. To replenish the heart.

To find ourselves again. And those we love.

If what we sense is true—and the approaching holidays will test it—the "coming-to-home" of America could not happen at a better time.

For the true business of Life is not conducted from an airline phone in a V.I.P. lounge.

It more than likely involves noticing the love behind a freshly hung drape; relaxing to the creak of an arthritic rocker; and oohing and aahing over a first tooth.

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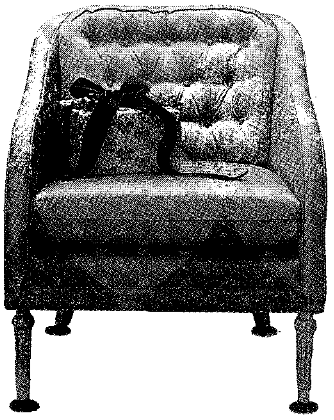
and that was from Claremont Graduate School, next door, and Pomona agreed to pay his tuition of five hundred dollars there toward a master's degree.

Meyer and others tried to console K by telling him that doctoral fellowships were a little like a lottery, and he should not pass up the chance to go to graduate school. But K was crushed, and he couldn't see how he could possibly go there, since he didn't want to keep relying on his family to help pay for his room and board. Then he heard that there was an opening for the job of resident assistant at Smiley Hall, one of the men's dormitories. He had always lived in Smiley, and the job provided free room and board for a year in return for assisting its majordomo. K applied for the job and got it, and then accepted the offer of admission to the graduate school. But soon he was fretting about his mother's reaction to his plans. "If I were going for teaching credentials, I think she would understand and would be prepared to sacrifice for another year for me to get on my feet. But as it is she's going to ask me what good is a master's degree, and I have no answer."

I suggested that maybe he should postpone his plans to go to Claremont Graduate School, but he felt that the arrangements were too far along for him to withdraw.

In 1954, K graduated cum laude, and he temporarily forgot his misgivings and apprehensions amid the general jubilation. K told me that his sisters, who came to the ceremony, were proud that they had helped in their small way to put him through college. (He didn't introduce me to them.) His mother, who didn't come, sent a message that she was delighted that her son had won a degree from an American college. Mrs. Lundstrom wrote him a letter beginning "Dear George," in which she said that all her confidence in him had been justified.

When K returned in the autumn, he told me, "I have done something very wrong. I didn't tell Mother that I'm a graduate student. I've led her to believe I'm getting my teaching credentials. She's very upset I'm still in school, but now she's expecting me to be through in the spring and start teaching in the autumn. I don't know how I'll ever be able to tell her the truth. I'm caught in the choice between my duty to Mother and further education." I could sense that his resolve was weakening.



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As time went on, however, K seemed to get interested in the material he was studying. He took heart from the comments of his professors on his work. He started corresponding with Meyer, who was teaching for a year at the University of Wisconsin. Meyer wrote that Wisconsin had an excellent graduate program in history and that he could help him get a fellowship there for the following year. K began talking as if he were convinced all over again that he would go on for a Ph.D. and that he would be able to earn it. He applied to Wisconsin, among other places.

"I still think life is a cabaret, but he demurs."

• •

At the beginning of the second semester, it was announced at the college convocation that in the first semester I had led the junior men in grades. K made a big fuss about it and proposed that we celebrate the event with dinner. We drove to Los Angeles and had our first expensive meal. We even had a bottle of champagne opened; we could get down only a few sips—neither of us had ever taken an alcoholic drink before. Since K was poor, I had taken it for granted that the dinner would be my treat. But when the bill came he insisted on paying it. I argued and protested, but he took the bill, saying, "I knew you wouldn't feast as well if I told you I would pay."

A day or two after the dinner, he came to my room and announced, "If I get a fellowship for next year, I'll turn it down. I'm never going to go on for a Ph.D.—I don't have the intellectual capacity for it. History is too difficult. I should never have gone to graduate school." He continued rather sheepishly, "This semester, I've already substituted some education courses for some history courses. I've applied to Claremont Graduate School for a renewal of my tuition fellowship to get my teaching credentials."

I was taken by surprise, even though he had changed his mind about the Ph.D. and his abilities many times before. "Lately, things have seemed to be going so well for you," I said.

"They weren't. I just didn't want you to know."

I tried to say something optimistic. "You can get teaching credentials first and go on for a Ph.D. sometime later."

"I'm much too old for that."

Nothing I said seemed to lift K's spirits.

For several weeks, K had been thinking about a topic for the thesis he was required to submit in order to receive his master's degree. He had considered writing on the problems of minorities in Europe but then had decided against it, because he didn't know any European languages. In any case, with Meyer away, he felt there was no one he could work with on the topic. Then he recalled that a year earlier he had heard a lecture at Pomona on the idea of progress in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, given by Professor Crane Brinton, who was visiting from Harvard. Brinton had made the subject sound very simple. K now settled on it as the topic of his thesis, but when he got down to his research he discovered that there was perhaps no subject on which there was more material in the library than the French Revolution—and he imagined that every book on the French Revolution had an important reference to the idea of progress in the eighteenth century. God only knew how many books there might be in the library with discussions on the idea of progress in the nineteenth century. "The library is like a forest," he told me. "I don't know where to begin. I could read for the rest of my life and still not get it all done."

Whenever I stopped by his room in Smiley Hall, he would be sitting at the typewriter, hammering away furiously. He kept at it but never seemed to get beyond the first page of his thesis. He started saying things like "I'm a moron" and "I'm not fit for anything."

"You work too hard," I told him once. "Go away for a couple of days, to the beach or the mountains."

"When I go home in June, I must have the degree to show Mother. If I don't have anything, I'll never be able to look her in the eye again."

It was nearing the end of March, and the college was about to close for spring vacation. I told K bluntly what I had so often hinted at: "I would like to meet your mother and your sisters." I thought I might try to explain K's situation to them. "Why haven't you

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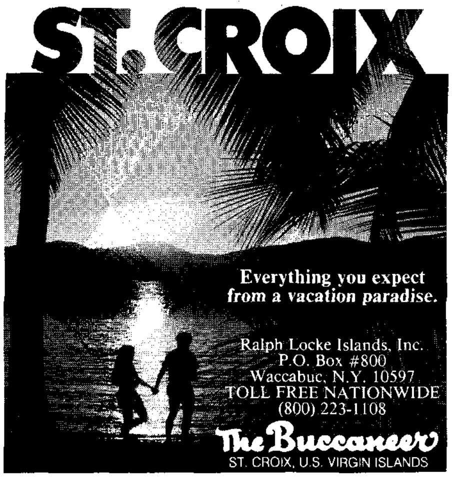

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introduced me to them so far?" I asked, and I all but invited myself to his home.

"Because"—and he stuttered—"I am ashamed of the way we have to live. I couldn't let you see our house. We are so poor. Mother . . ."

I protested. "Do you think that matters?" I reminded him about my own parents and how the Partition had left us almost penniless, but it seemed there was nothing I could say to make him see that he didn't need to be ashamed of his poverty around me.

I got up to leave.

"I want you to know that you are my best friend," he said, in a strangely shy voice.

We saw each other so often that as a rule we did not shake hands, but this time he put out his hand. I took it. Slight of build, he had short, thin hands but generally a strong handshake. This time, his hand was a little limp and cold.

K came back from spring vacation with a draft of his thesis. He showed it to his thesis adviser, John Gleason. Gleason told him that it was labored and confused, and that the style needed a lot of work, and he intimated that perhaps K should think about getting teaching credentials after all. Henry Cooke, the other thesis reader, had more or less the same opinion. K was stunned. I read the thesis and tried to help him revise it. But it seemed that, short of rewriting, there was no easy way to fix it.

Around the middle of April, he came to my room and said he had scarcely the beginnings of a second draft. "There's no way I can get it done by May 2nd," he said. That was the day the thesis was due.

"Why don't you get an extension until the middle of June?" I said. I thought if he got his thesis in under the wire he could still get his degree.

K lost his temper. "You're just like the rest of them—you don't think much of my intellect."

"That was the last thing I had in mind. I just wanted you to have a few extra weeks to work on your second draft."

K ran out of my room angrily before I had finished my sentence. He telephoned me a few minutes later to apologize, but also to say that he would not ask for an extension.

As it happened, in the fortnight before his thesis was due I didn't see much of him, because my father was visiting. I hadn't seen my father for almost a year and a half, and I missed breakfasts and lunches and spent every spare moment studying so that I could take some time off and be with him. Somehow, I didn't run into K. I was so preoccupied that I neglected to call him, and it didn't register with me that he hadn't called me. Except for Christmas and summer vacations, this was the longest we had gone without seeing each other.

I met my father in Long Beach and returned to Claremont with him on the evening of May 1st. I remembered that K's thesis was due the next day, and I called him.

K answered the phone. "Hello?" His voice sounded distant and shaky.

"I'm sorry I've been out of touch, but Daddy's been here. How's it going, K?"

"Badly, very badly," he said impatiently.

I waited for him to go on, but he didn't. "You're exaggerating," I said, finally.

"I can't have it ready by tomorrow."

"Damn it, it's still not too late to ask Gleason for an extension. I'm sure if you asked him he'd give it to you."

"He's counting on my handing it in tomorrow."

"Gleason will understand." There was a pause. That made me wary. "K, give me your word that you will call Gleason right after you hang up, and try for the extension. Promise me," I urged.

"If you say so, I will," he said, in an offhand way. "I want to see you very much. May I come over now?"

"I'm not in my room. I'm staying with Daddy at the Claremont Inn. I'd like very much for you to meet him. Let's have dinner together tomorrow." He was silent. "K, are you there?"

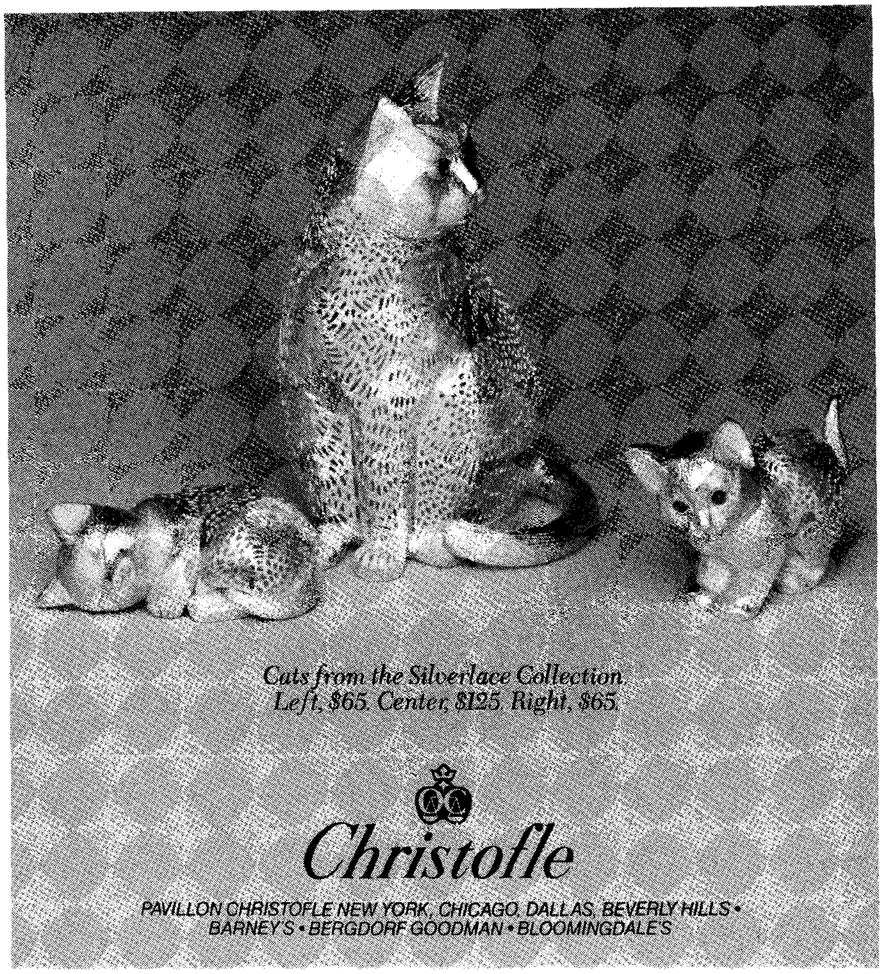
"Yes." All of a sudden, I felt guilty for having put him off. "I guess that's all," he said faintly.

"I'll come by tomorrow, and then we can make arrangements for dinner together." I reminded him about his promise to get the extension, and we hung up.

The next day, I stopped by his room twice, but he wasn't there. The second time, I pulled out a piece of paper from an overflowing wastepaper basket, sat down on his bed—which was strewn with papers—and was about to type out a note to him when I noticed that there was a half-typed sheet in the machine. I didn't want to disturb the typing and decided to call him later. Afterward, I telephoned him a couple of times, but there was no answer. That evening, I went to the college to pick up a change of clothes and try to find K. Just as I entered my room, the telephone rang. It was Johnnie, and she said, "Have you heard? K shot himself. He's dead."

The telephone dropped from my hand. I felt stunned, guilty, helpless. Then I thought of how K's friendship had been a light to me. The light at times might have been shaded or obscured, but now it had gone out. I was left to find my own way through the darkness of his death. I tried to think of K as I had known him. I thought of his short, thin hands and his small physical stature. But instead of his familiar soft voice I heard a deeper, judgmental voice, blaming me for not being more supportive—for not making a point of seeing him during his last desperate days.

I mourned K all that summer, which I spent at Harvard summer school, taking courses in the twentieth-century novel and short-story writing. When I got back to Pomona for my senior year, I felt lost. Every time I passed under the window of K's room—something I couldn't help doing at least a dozen times a day, to and from classes, the library, and meals at Frary Hall—I would hesitate, half expecting K to call down to me to wait for him, as he had done almost daily, so that we could walk together. Also, my studies didn't have their old meaning. And the high grades for which I'd worked so hard, and all the honors—standing first among the sophomores, standing first among junior men in the first semester, and, most recently, being nominated as a junior for Phi Beta Kappa—felt empty, for it seemed to me that K had failed because he pursued knowledge for its own sake, while I had succeeded because I concentrated on results. I thought that in an ideal college the students would not be rushed through learning and rewarded for a storehouse of carefully arranged and neatly labelled packets of facts but be given time for reflection and rumination, for development of the sensibilities, for cultivation of critical thinking, and for self-expression. I let up on my rigorous study schedule and took long walks,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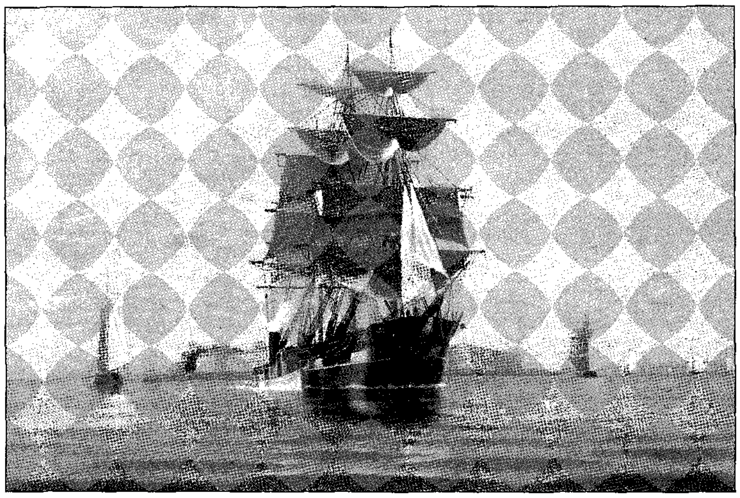
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during which I imagined that I was communing with nature, like the Romantic poets. Wherever I went, I also listened for human situations, which I tried to turn into short stories, a little in the manner of the later Tolstoy. By no means did I wish to abandon my studies—my interest in literature, history, and philosophy was as strong as ever. I simply wanted to study the subjects in my own time, in my own way, without the constraints of assignments and examinations. Like Tennyson, I yearned not for knowledge but for wisdom.

SOME more entries from my journal —this time from my senior year:

OCTOBER 27

I simply must know some Latin if I'm going to get to Oxford, but it is one of the hardest subjects I have ever taken, and my Latin professor is going at a speed that is leaving us gasping. I am spending almost two hours a day at Latin outside the class.

NOVEMBER 4

After I don't know how many letters to and from Oxford, I have my admission to Balliol College. It's conditional on my getting money to support myself there for two years, but it is an unequivocal "yes."

JANUARY 8

Johnnie has applied for a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. She says if she gets it she'll go to Cal to study English as a graduate student. She's also applied for a Fulbright to go to France. If she doesn't get either fellowship, she says, she might teach high school or grade school. If that fails, she says, she might get married to someone at Stanford business school. And she's *in earnest* about it. So that's what it all comes down to—and she's writing a brilliant essay on Joyce, Woolf, Galsworthy, and Bennett.

JANUARY 24

I've got the money—I'm going to Oxford! Unbeknownst to me, Mrs. Watumull [the Watumull Foundation had awarded me a scholarship to attend Pomona] suggested to the Hazen Foundation that it give me a fellowship. The president of the foundation writes to say they will do it. Such a thing could only happen in America. I can't believe my good luck.

APRIL 6

Today received a great piece of news—Harvard has awarded me its national prize fellowship of $2,200 a year for three years to do a Ph.D. in history. But, alas, I prefer the Hazen Oxford alternative and have so written to Dean Reginald Phelps of the Harvard Graduate School. I've asked him, however, if I could come there after doing a second undergraduate degree at Oxford.

APRIL 15

Dean Phelps of Harvard writes that Harvard cannot postpone my fellowship or promise that they will give favorable consideration to my application after Oxford, but he's hopeful. That's enough for me.

There are many journal entries about the narrative that I had written in Seattle. Edward Weeks, the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, had read and liked it. He actually gave me an advance to pay an amanuensis so that I could finish it. Indeed, I spent the summer after graduation in Cambridge, consulting with him frequently, and finished it there. Although it was rough, a mere outline of the story I wanted to write eventually, Mr. Weeks published it, as "Face to Face," and it became my first book.

IN the middle of my senior year, when I stopped in at the Religion Department after lunch to pick up a book, Mary (her name has been changed), who was working there as an assistant, asked, in a Southern accent, "You're really from India, India?" As she got the book for me, she went on, "What are you doing so far away from home?"

I gave her a brief, reticent answer—I'd never met her before—and turned to leave.

"Not so fast," she said, a little imperiously. "Where I come from, gentlemen don't just give ladies the brushoff unless they are downright rude—and then they're not gentlemen." She laughed. Her laugh was girlish but rich and full.

"You must be new at the college," I said, turning back to her. She sounded young and pretty and flirtatious.

"New as a penny," she said, and added, "You mean everyone here knows you except poor old me?"

"Where in the South do you come from?" I asked.

"Fresh from Nashville. This is my first job and my first time away from Tennessee."

We talked a bit about being away from home. Then she asked abruptly, "Are you going to invite me for a Coke at the Coop or run out of here like a wild man?"

Left to myself, I probably wouldn't have had the courage to ask her even to have a Coke with me, although it was more than a year since I'd had a date, and I was starved for feminine company. In fact, with her I felt even more shy and formal than usual, because she was clearly older and not a fellow-student. But as we left the office together for the Coop I felt elated at having met her.

"Pomona seems like such a special

place," Mary said. "You're so lucky to be going here."

"I don't know about that," I said, hedging.

"I get the impression that everyone here is always busy, busy, busy," she said. "Even when people are having fun, they seem to do it in a busy way. Now, at Vanderbilt, where I went, people worked but they also had a lot of fun." Such commonplace observations coming from someone else might have made me cringe, but from her they sounded original, as if a particularly keen outside observer were evaluating Pomona students.

"What did you do for fun at Vanderbilt?" I asked.

"Sometimes nothing more than sit in a swing in the gallery and get into a brown study," she said, mysteriously.

"I've come across 'brown study' in novels, but what is a gallery?"

"I thought you were going to ask me that," she said. "That's why I used Southern words. I heard you like to write, and I know writers like words."

I had to tease the meaning of "gallery" out of her. She finally said, "It's a porch."

As a rule, I spent hardly more than five minutes in the Coop—its atmosphere of group life made me anxious—but that day I must have spent the better part of the afternoon there; I even stood up my reader. I couldn't get enough of Mary's languid voice, her Southern drawl, her quaint speech—her unhurried Southern ways. As she talked, I mentally compared her with the girls I'd known—girls I'd dated or tried to date. She's a prize, like Johnnie, I concluded. Of course, she's not as intelligent as Johnnie, but then Johnnie never took a real interest in me. But Mary seems to be interested in me as a man, as if I could see. She is natural, accepting, self-confident.

"Have you ever been to the South?" Mary was asking me.

"I went to high school in Arkansas."

"Heaven alive! Then we have a lot to talk about."

I was no longer in touch with any of my Arkansas school friends; hardly any of them had gone on to college, and our different concerns and the geographical distance had drawn us apart. At Pomona, to have spent some time in Arkansas was infra dig, so I'd done my best to outgrow my Arkansas past. In fact, I'd come so far from it that I found even my Pomona present parochial and was dreaming about a glamorous Oxford future. Listening to Mary talk, however, made me almost homesick for Arkansas, homesick for my high-school friends, and made me realize for the first time that I had an American past. Her excitement made me suddenly value Arkansas, and, by extension, myself—even if fleetingly.

I told her a little about Arkansas. Before long, I was confiding to her that I felt tongue-tied around women but that she was different. As we were saying goodbye, I invited her to meet me after dinner that evening at the Sugar Bowl, a small café in town run by two spinsterish ladies. To my delight, she accepted.

At the Sugar Bowl, almost before we had sat down and ordered apple cider Mary said, "I hope you're a Christian. You know, I couldn't be dating someone who isn't."

The word "dating" took my breath away, because it meant that she thought of us as having a continuing relationship rather than a casual friendship. In my Indian way, I immediately began wondering how she would fit into our family system. But her statement about Christianity gave me pause. Lately, as I had endured sorrows that did not admit of rational explanations, I'd been turning to God. I was drawn, however, not to Hinduism—it seemed to me as absurd as the clay figures of the gods and goddesses, with their multiple heads and arms, that my mother worshipped—but to Christianity. In addition to having roots in my childhood—I'd been sent to an American missionary school as a small boy—Christianity now seemed as inspiring as the Western history, philosophy, literature, and music that I was studying. Although I was by no stretch of the imagination a practicing Christian, I felt I had to give Mary an unequivocal answer if we were to go on seeing each other, so I said boldly, "Of course I'm a Christian."

"I love getting all dressed up and going to church," she said. "I like to sing in church. Do you?"

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"Well, my voice isn't trained for Western singing," I said, and I tried to turn the conversation from church and singing to Indian music.

"But which church do you belong to? I like Mr. Rankin's sermons, don't you?"

"I do," I said. Although I'd scarcely heard Robert Rankin, the chaplain of the Associated Colleges in Claremont, preach, I reasoned that I might as well have, because over the years I'd had many conversations with him about Hinduism, Christianity, and Zen Buddhism.

"What do you like most about being a Christian?"

The question was so unexpected that it took me a minute or two to formulate an answer. "Reading the New Testament," I finally said, a little lamely, and I added, "I can't imagine anyone studying English literature and not being interested in the Bible."

"But a believing Christian has to go to church and be on fire with faith," she said. "I don't feel alive unless I've heard a sermon every week."

Oh dear, she's going to ask me to go to church with her, I thought. The very idea filled me with dread. I had scarcely been to a religious service since Arkansas, where we students were required to go to the church of our choice, and I had chosen the Episcopal church. I remembered how self-conscious I would feel when the minister asked the congregation to turn to this page in the prayer book or that page in the hymnal, and people around me would raise their voices in prayer or song while I, not knowing the words, stood there with a blank face and empty hands. If I tried to mouth the words by following my neighbors, I would always be a syllable or two behind. That didn't matter so much with sibilant words like "trespasses," but short words like "done" stuck out, exploding in my ear like firecrackers. Sometimes I would doze off during the sermon and keep waking up thinking that it was over and people were standing up and I alone was still sitting.

"I don't often go to church here," I said. Because I couldn't bring myself to tell her everything that terrified me about church, I merely said that it was difficult for me to walk into church alone.

"Yes, I thought I hadn't seen you in

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church," she said. "Let's go to church together next Sunday."

There was no help for it—I'd brought the situation on myself—so I agreed. "It's a date."

That Sunday, I was in turmoil as I went to church with Mary, but she hardly seemed to notice my faltering singing and praying. She and I joined other couples in the vestibule, waiting to shake the minister's hand, and afterward we all discussed the sermon. Until then, I had scarcely been aware that there was a social dimension to church.

MARY had a car, and she went everywhere in it. It was a Buick, and I soon learned to recognize the soft purring of its engine. Sometimes when I was walking on the campus I would hear it beside me. "Hey, there!" she would call out. "Can I give you a ride?"

At first, I resisted, partly because nothing on the campus was very far from anything else, but also because I didn't like being seen sitting next to a woman behind the wheel. She wouldn't take no for an answer, however, and I soon grew to like riding around with her. She had a relaxed way of driving, which I came to enjoy. She would drive with one hand on the wheel and the other holding my hand, and she'd call out greetings to friends along the way, sing, and, if I had a few extra minutes before a class, race out of town and zoom along Route 66 in a spirit of pure devil-may-care and somehow get me back just in time.

Mary liked to go to films. One of the first ones we saw together was "Rebel Without a Cause." At one point during the "chicken" scene, she burst into tears. I was both touched and overwhelmed. I tentatively held a handkerchief to her eyes, fearing that she would brush it away, but she took my hand and guided it. Her goodness is worth all the intelligence of Pomona girls, I thought.

After the film, she invited me to her home—a cottage, where she lived alone. She made tea and had me sit next to her on the sofa. I took her hand. She started caressing the back of my hand. I leaned toward her, wondering what she would do if I tried to kiss her. Then I felt frightened and brusquely drew back. She's too tall, I thought. She's at least two inches taller than I am. I can be attracted only to shorter girls.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Nothing."

"But what are you thinking?"

My thought struck me as so absurd that I quickly said, "I'm thinking about you." The remark sounded obviously false.

"Silly Billy." She leaned toward me. She touched my face. Our mouths met. I was surprised by how natural it felt to kiss her.

Unlike many of the Pomona women, Mary seemed full of transparent feminine charm and wiles. She paid a lot of attention to dress, used hand lotion, and wore perfume during the day as well as in the evening. At first, I found her scent overpowering, but soon I accepted it as a part of her personality. Although, unlike me, she drank coffee and occasionally smoked a cigarette, she felt guilty about doing so. "Oh, Lordy!" she would say. "If people down home saw me drinking coffee or smoking, they'd be right well scandalized. I'll have to give them up before I go home to Nashville."

At the time, I was reading the Existentialists and used to agonize about who I was, why I was here, where I was going. The few times I mentioned such concerns to her, she brushed them aside as the worries of a man who had not yet fully discovered the joys of faith. She often spoke of people who read a lot and thought a lot as too intellectual; they were not ladies and gentlemen, she said. All this was contrary to everything I had ever thought. Indeed, I couldn't imagine anyone being too intellectual.

"Don't you ever wonder if your faith is true?" I once asked her.

"Do I wonder if my name is Mary?"

One evening, when we were around some of my intellectual friends, she dropped the fact that she had been elected homecoming queen at Vanderbilt.

"How corny!" one of them said, laughing.

I squirmed, but she wasn't fazed. She simply said, "To be elected homecoming queen, you have to be pretty and popular. Now, I ain't saying I'm pretty, but, boy, I was sure popular."

I felt a surge of pride in her for standing up for herself.

Mary tended to be late, so when we were going to concerts or plays on campus I would make it a point to arrive early at her cottage and would wait downstairs while she finished dressing upstairs. I found myself mesmerized by sounds of her opening and shutting drawers, brushing her hair, trying on shoes. The walls and ceiling were so thin that I had the illusion I was in the room with her. If I tried to hurry her along, she would call down, "Don't you know that women are always late?"—a remark that reminded me how little experience I still had of women outside my family. I would begin to fret that she might throw me over for an experienced, sighted man. Then I would hear her running down the stairs with a light, eager step. Soon I was breathing her fragrance and feeling her kiss. She had generous, warm lips, and if, in my shyness, I was a little stiff she would take my face between her hands. At such a moment, everything—grades, Oxford, money, sighted men—would suddenly fall away.

There were many things I did for the first time with Mary. We went to a football game. We went grocery shopping. We would walk down the crowded aisles wheeling the cart, as if we were a married couple. Then I would daydream about one day having a wife and pushing our child in a perambulator through a park, and I would feel weak all over with excitement and fear.

Mary often cooked dinner for us, and she didn't let me just stand around the kitchen but put me to work peeling and chopping, washing and stirring. She sometimes put a bite of something in my mouth to see how I liked it. I felt I had never been so intimate with anyone.

Whenever Mary sensed that I was self-conscious about my blindness, she would involve me in an activity—washing her car, for instance. Sometimes, she would even ask me to help her select her clothes for an evening. With someone else, that would have made me even more uncomfortable about my blindness, but it wasn't so with her. She would describe the colors of various outfits so simply and vividly that I had the feeling I was seeing them for myself. Nor was that feeling a total fantasy, I thought. After all, I'd been able to see until I was almost four. I felt that the experience of those years must have been preserved somewhere in the depths of my mind.

One evening, as she ran down the stairs with her usual eagerness and I stood up to kiss her, she stepped back and said, "You didn't even notice that I have a new dress on."

It's hopeless, I thought. She should be going out with someone who can see and admire her.

"I did notice," I said truculently, trying to bluff my way out of the miserable situation.

"Then why didn't you say something?"

It was uncharacteristic of her first to confront me and then to needle me. I felt as though I had walked into a door that had been shut in my face. I wanted to rush back to my room and nurse my hurt in private.

"I always have the sense when I'm with you that you can see me, and you can tell the color of my clothes," she was saying.

I was four, and was back in Lahore. My mother was flipping the light switch faster and faster, asking me, as her breathing got harder and harder with asthma, "Can you tell? Is the light on or off?"

"I can't tell."

"Look. Open your eyes. On or off?" *Click click click click click.*

"Off."

Her breathing was harder now, "Try again." *Click click click click click.*

Five clicks. "On," I said.

"You sure?"

"Yes."

"Then you can see a little."

"Yes."

"Try again." *Click click click click click click click.*

"Light or dark?"

Seven clicks. "Dark," I said.

"Oh, loving God, You have heard my prayers." The wheezing subsided, and she was bending over me and kissing me, with her tears and hair falling over my face.

"Of course I can see you," I now said to Mary.

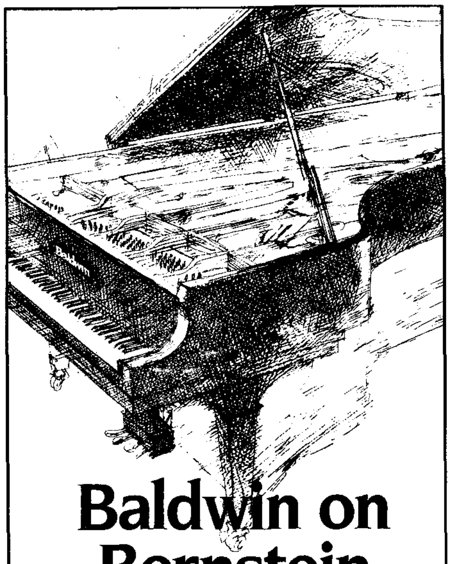
"Red must feel different from blue."

"Sometimes," I lied. I took the sleeve of her dress between my thumb and forefinger and felt it carefully, putting on a look of deep concentration. She favors whites and pastels, I thought.

"What color?"

My pulse quickened. She is going to catch me out, I thought. I'll lose her.

"It's emerald green," she volun-



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teered. "It brings out the color of my eyes." The moment of reckoning had passed, and I sighed with relief. She took my face in her hands. "You can tell everything," she said. "I bet you even know how I look on a particular day."

"Sometimes."

"Then the blind can see. God has His own mysterious ways of compensating for everything."

The focus had shifted from my abilities to those of the blind generally. And when it came to them I was as brutally honest as though I were not one of them. "They can do nothing of the kind," I said.

"Well, you may not always know exactly how I look, but you always know how I feel."

"That's the Gospel truth." I hadn't used that phrase since Arkansas.

I recalled one of my father's beliefs—that I could be happy only with a Christian girl, because Christians were taught love and compassion, while Hindus were taught merely fate and duty. I decided to throw myself on her compassion. "Mary, I can't tell you how you look on any day. There's no way I can tell colors."

After a moment of silence, she said cheerfully, "Then we'll just pretend you can."

I wanted to go on, but she shushed me, and I let the matter drop. After all, I rationalized, I live in the seeing world, and I lead my life as if I could see. Why should I make such an issue with her of the whole question of seeing? I could not, however, I realized now, keep on pretending that I was a Christian. Ever since I lied to her about being a Christian, I'd been having nightmares. "Mary," I said, "you should know that I'm not a Christian. I'm drawn to the religion, but at present I'm nothing."

"You think that's big news to me?" she asked haughtily. "Everyone at the college knows you're one of the cynical intellectuals. But Mr. Rankin has his eye on you. He will make sure that you find Jesus."

As I was about to protest that I was not a cynic but I wouldn't be ready for Christianity for a long time, if ever, she again took my face in her hands and said, "You bad boy, you. I could tell you a thing or two about me that would shock the daylights out of you."

I felt her warm lips on mine, and words didn't seem to matter anymore. We walked out of the cottage hand in hand.

A few lines from "Love's Labor's Lost," which had made a great impression on me when I first read the play, came into my head:

From women's eyes this doctrine I
derive:
They sparkle still the right Prome-
thean fire;
They are the books, the arts, the
academes,
That show, contain, and nourish all
the world.

ONE evening after Mary and I finished a meal that she had prepared, she surprised me by asking me to do the dishes—something I'd hardly ever done before. I set about scraping the food off the pots and pans with as much enthusiasm as I could muster but found it hard going. Mary had a habit of being profligate in her use of such utensils, so there was a little mountain of things to be washed. Also, I couldn't be sure I had scraped something clean without running my fingers over the greasy surface. After a while, I said, "Mary, why don't you wash and I'll dry and put things away?"

"Down home, ladies slave over the stove, and gentlemen clean up," she said.

Curse down home, I thought, and I started piling the plates in the sink, making as much noise as I could.

"Now, you be careful with those pretty dishes," she said.

I applied soap to the sponge, telling myself she was only treating me like an ordinary man, and that was what I wanted.

"This doesn't look very clean," she said, picking up a plate I'd washed. She put it in the sink for me to wash again.

"Mary, please take over," I said. "You can do it in no time."

"Can't have that, now. Down home—"

"I know."

Later that evening, after I'd finished the dishes, we were sitting on the sofa. I took her hand and leaned toward her to kiss her.

"No, no, no," she said.

I couldn't tell whether she was miffed at me for not doing the dishes with better grace or was just being coquettish. "I think we are going too fast," she said.

She's right, I thought. We have known each other for only a couple of months. But my hand went cold; I thought all was over, and a feeling of my own worthlessness gripped me. I always felt that one misstep would be the end of a romantic relationship.

"I'm not ready to give you all you want," she was saying.

"I don't think I've ever asked you for anything," I said.

"You need a woman around, you need a home. And me? I'm just trying out my wings. I want to go back to Nashville in June, get my own apartment and a job, and have fun for a few years."

"But that's all right," I said. "I plan to go to Oxford. All I want is to continue as we are and then see what happens. But don't put a stop now to something that I've really had for only the first time."

"But you're not a Christian."

"I don't know myself exactly what I am."

She waited for me to go on, but I didn't know what else to say. She dropped my hand. There was never any hope of anything coming of it anyway, I thought. I was about to get up and leave. Suddenly, she nestled close to me and put her head on my shoulder. She touched my ear. "I never noticed before that your ears are so close to your head," she said. She had a way of raising my spirits just when they were at their lowest.

I reached to kiss her. She pulled away. The windows in the cottage were loose, and a little breeze rattled through them, disturbing the stillness of the evening. "You are a Hindu cynic, and I am a Christian," she said, with a sigh.

"Just say you are a Christian, Mary, and leave it there," I said, my spirits sinking again.

"Then what are you?"

"When we met, I thought the Christianity of my childhood was returning, but now I've gone back to being an agnostic. That is what I've been all along."

"I am one of those people who have to have faith in order to be alive. I shouldn't be dating anybody who doesn't have faith."

It was true—it was hard to think of Mary without faith. In fact, I felt that if she had not been religious she would not have gone out with me in the first place. All the same, I needed time to think. I mustn't say or do anything that might precipitate a break. I stalled. "I suppose you'd want me to be not only Christian but also Baptist."

"I couldn't marry anybody who wasn't a Baptist."

The word "marry" had never been uttered between us. I could scarcely say it inside my head. I mostly thought of marriage and a wife in the abstract—never of anyone I knew really marrying me. Now Mary had brought the idea of marrying her out into the open. And, however intimate we were, the idea of having her—Mary—around me all the time and letting her see how inadequate I was, see that I wasn't even able to read or write without assistance, was frightening. I abruptly stood up and walked to the window.

"If I didn't think that deep down you were Christian, I wouldn't be going out with you," she said. "I've known all along that you have a cynical side to you. That's the side that I've been praying to change. I've been praying right along that you will join my church."

"And come and live with you in Nashville, Tennessee?" I said sarcastically.

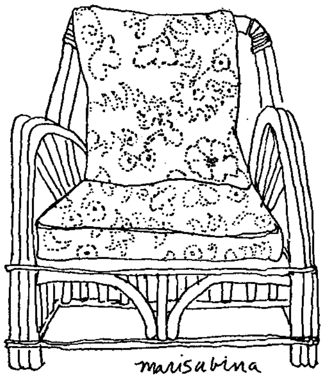
"No. I thought you were going to go home and live in India."

"Then why do you care whether I'm Christian or not?"

"Because, silly, I want the best for you, as I want the best for myself."

I felt so confused that I wished I'd never met her, never held her, never gone with her to films, to dinners, to church, to concerts, to parties, to grocery stores. She had immeasurably enriched my life, but, as I now saw it, at the enormous emotional cost to me of inevitably losing her. I was no more ready for her than she was for me, but in some part of my mind—perhaps because of my Indian background, in which men didn't get to know any women outside marriage except relatives—I had us established as a permanent couple.

"Mary, it does no good to talk about such things," I said. "I'm still searching for God."



"You just think too much," she said. "You talk as though it were an act to believe in God. I wonder if you'll ever be ready for God."

I flung the window open, and the room suddenly lost its intimate, enclosed feeling. It became cold and drafty.

"Come here and sit beside me," she said, and I did. "I could not be close to anyone who I thought was rejected by God."

"You think that there is no salvation outside Christianity?" I thought it was best to make the conversation less personal.

"None, as far as I know." It was the first time she had qualified her faith—yielded some ground, as I saw it, by admitting that there might be a place for a nonbeliever in her world. "I am willing to change for you," she said, "but only so far."

"So you do understand. You do allow for my confusion."

"How can I understand? Do I ever argue about who my father is? Then how can I about God?"

"Mary, we are so happy together, except when we talk about religion." I took her hand. "You don't know how much you mean to me." She snuggled closer.

When I left her, it was three o'clock in the morning. Outside, the air smelled of rain, and before I'd gone very far it was drizzling. The *plop-plop* of the raindrops on the branches and leaves of the eucalyptus trees accentuated the silence around me.

A few evenings later, I dropped by Mary's house on my way back from the library, and found a man I'll call Bud sitting in my exact spot on the sofa, with Mary beside him. Bud and I knew each other slightly, and we awkwardly shook hands.

"All gentlemen telephone before they call," Mary said, without showing any embarrassment.

I thought of saying that I had never had to telephone before, but instead I left as soon as I gracefully could. The next evening, I asked her about Bud, and found out that she had been dating him off and on for over a month. At first, I thought of berating her for her duplicity, but then I told myself that any sighted girl in her right mind would prefer a sighted man to me, and Bud was not just any sighted man—he was a model Pomona man. He played football, sang in the college glee club, and was a member of Nu Alpha Phi, the most socially prominent campus fraternity, standing out even among his fraternity brothers for being "happy, helpful, and hopeful;" he was also a Ghost, a member of the most illustrious male honorary society. I told myself I should be grateful for having had any attention at all from a girl whom Bud found desirable. My anger gave way to sadness.

After that evening, Mary started putting me off when I asked her for a date. I knew I should stop asking her, but I couldn't bring myself to do that, especially since she was her usual loving self when we did see each other. So I pretended I didn't know that she was going out with Bud, even as I both dreaded and longed for the day when she would come right out and tell me that Bud had supplanted me in her affections. She made no move to tell me, however.

One evening, as we were walking to her cottage after a church supper, I couldn't contain myself any longer, and burst out, "How can you possibly date both Bud and me?"

"Down home, ladies have lots of suitors," she said, as calmly as if we were discussing the supper menu.

"You didn't have any other suitors when we first started seeing each other."

"Not true. For a couple of years, I've been corresponding with two boys in the Navy who've been wanting to marry me. Until a lady gets married, she can have as many admirers as she likes. You know that."

I felt a pang. She was never mine completely, and now I've lost what little I had of her, I thought. If she only wants a good time, she can have a much better time with Bud or the two sailors than she ever can with me. "How will you go about choosing among your suitors?" I asked wearily.

"Whoever deserves me will win my hand," she said, and she asked me if I wanted to hear about her sailors. I nodded in spite of myself, and she started describing them, making one sound more alluring than the other, and thereby making a game of my concern. She was so beguiling that I was drawn into the game as if I had no personal stake in what she was talking about.

We had reached her cottage, and sat down on the front steps. It was a warm evening with the pleasant scent of eucalyptus in the air.

I made a case for the sailor who seemed to have the better worldly prospects.

"You talk as though I were looking to buy a house."

"That's the way marriages are made in India," I said gravely.

She blew up. "What's the matter with you? Aren't you jealous? Don't you care about me at all?" To my amazement, she began to weep. She went on murmuring, "You don't care, you don't care."

"I do, too," I said, clumsily putting my handkerchief up to her eyes. "I've been devastated by your carrying on with Bud."

"Then why haven't you said anything about it?"

"I hate scenes, and, anyway, I know my place."

By the end of the evening, I had concluded that although she might be out for a good time—indeed, was leading us all on without knowing it—her feelings for me were every bit as genuine as I had originally assumed them to be.

WHEN I telephoned Mary one evening to see if she was free for dinner, she said she wasn't but invited me to stop by after dinner for a snack when the library closed. I was touched by her remembering that after I'd spent an evening in the library I was always hungry. When I stopped by, I had trouble thinking of something to say; we hadn't seen each other for almost a week, and the ground of our relationship seemed to be giving way. "It's my birthday," I blurted out. I hadn't planned to tell her that.

"You're kidding. How old are you?"

"Twenty-two. But I feel the same way I did when I was eighteen."

"I don't feel a day over eighteen, either, though I'm twenty-five."

Mary had not previously revealed her age. Whenever the subject came up, she had dismissed it with some such remark as "You should never ask a lady her age." All along, I'd known she was older than I was, but I was taken aback to learn that there was such a big difference in our ages.

"Why didn't you warn me?" she was saying. "I would have had a birthday cake with twenty-two candles if I'd known. I would have made the cake myself, as big as a tray. I would have had a party for you. It's not too late. Let's call up Jean and Jack and Nicholas—"

"I just want a quiet evening with you."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Since I left home, I haven't mentioned my birthday to anyone."

"Why not?"

"I don't know myself. Perhaps I don't want to be pitied for being so far away from home. It's absurd, really. I don't even read the letters I receive from home around my birthday until after it's over. I don't want the person reading them to me to feel obliged to make a fuss."

Mary walked into the kitchen, and I followed. She looked in the refrigerator. "I don't have a treat in the house."

"Don't you have some bread?"

"You know I always have bread."

"Well, then, let's have cinnamon toast and tea, the way we used to do when the library closed."

"What a fun idea," Mary said.

She put some slices of bread in the toaster and started opening and shutting the kitchen cabinets.

"What are you looking for?"

"Just because you're a birthday boy doesn't mean you have a right to all my secrets," Mary said, laughing.

We sat down at the kitchen table for our cinnamon toast and tea. It turned out that she had stuck a couple of small candles in candleholders into my piece of toast, and now she ceremoniously lighted them. "Hurry up, blow them

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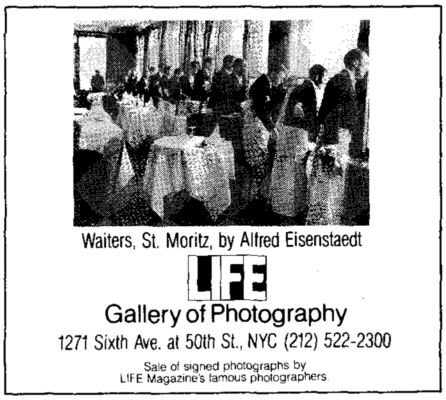
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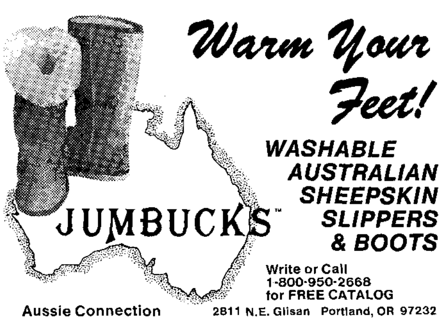
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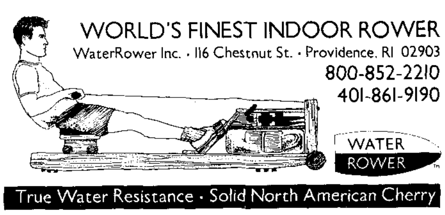
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out, and be sure to make a wish," she said, holding the flames up to my face. They felt very hot.

I was a little boy, and my mother was standing at my bedside, saying, "Wake up, wake up." When I sat up, she held something near my face. "What is it?" she asked, her breath coming hard.

"It's a flame."

"Can you see it?"

"It's very hot," I said hesitantly.

To my relief, she didn't press me. "Child, blow on it and make a wish."

"Why?"

"It's your birthday!"

I blew on the candle but couldn't think of a wish.

"Now you'll grow up to be a sahib like your daddy and ride a blue horse like a rich man," she said.

That was the last time I'd had candles for my birthday. On later birthdays, I'd just had sweetmeats, like everybody else. But when my birthday came I sometimes thought of the flame in my mother's hand, and my cheeks would feel hot—just as they did now. And I also had the illusion now that I was not only feeling the heat of the flames in Mary's hand but actually seeing the orangy-yellow flicker, just as my mother had wished me to. But the flames in Mary's hand were burning low. I made a silent wish: "I want us to be together like this forever and ever." At that moment, I would have given everything—my ambitions and all—for my wish to come true, and, by extension, my mother's wish for a full and rich life for me. I took a deep breath and blew out both candles.

"Honey, after I make a wish I always pray," Mary was saying. "Then the wish always comes true."

Automatically, I started praying: "Heavenly Father, let us remain like this always." If her God can move mountains, He can do anything, I thought—make me her husband, a Christian, and a professor overnight.

Mary bit into her cinnamon toast and took a sip of her tea. "What did you wish?" she asked, and immediately added, "Don't tell me, or it won't come true."

The precaution is academic, I thought, coming back to earth. The wish is totally absurd. It was nearly the end of March, and in June she would be finishing her job and returning to Nashville, while I, as soon as I had graduated, would go to Cambridge to spend the summer working on my manuscript. And from there I would go to Balliol College, Oxford, where students living in college were required to be single and be part of a mostly male society. Anyway, I had scarcely enough money to get myself to England, never mind paying for her to come with me.

"You know how to do little things and do them beautifully," I said.

"On your birthdays, you must feel especially homesick," she said.

"I do, but I generally keep my homesickness under wraps." I mechanically repeated one of my father's sayings: "What cannot be cured must be endured."

"Soon it will be seven years since you saw your mother, won't it?" she said.

Her simple sentence, and the fact that she had added up in her head all the years I'd been away from home, affected me deeply. I found myself talking freely to her, in a way I hadn't talked to anyone since I came to America. "I used to think that the longer I stayed away from home the less I would miss it," I said. "But it hasn't worked out that way. I miss it more and more. I sometimes think that if I hadn't been able to see my father in America I might not be alive today."

"Fiddlesticks! You intellectuals can really be morbid."

I laughed. "We Indians have very closely knit families—that's our whole world." I told her about my sisters, Pom and Nimi and Umi and Usha, and my brothers, Om and Ashok.

And she talked about her father, who was a florist, and her two younger sisters and baby brother. She said she wished I could see their pictures.

I told her that sometimes I wished I could see pictures of my own family, to refresh my memory.

"But you must remember their voices."

"Voices fade very quickly. In fact, I think their voices faded in my head within a few months of my reaching Arkansas. After I'd been there a few months, they sent me a record they'd made at a carnival in Delhi. The voices already sounded so different from the way I remembered them—I couldn't believe my ears. And the record was so bad that I couldn't play it more than two or three times. Since

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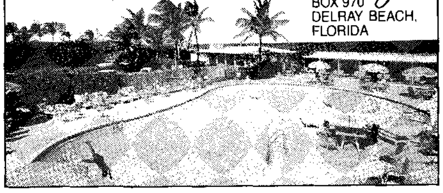

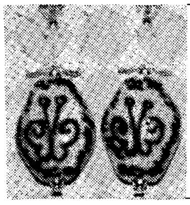

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then, I haven't heard the voice of even one of them."

"Why don't you telephone?"

"It takes hours to get through. Then, it's a radio connection, and they say you can't hear very much, and it's very expensive."

There at the kitchen table, we talked into the night, reminiscing about our homes and families, my eyes once or twice filling with tears.

"You ought to share more," she said at one point. "You shouldn't hold back so much. Maybe if you talked more about your family to someone it would help."

I noticed she said "someone," not "me," but it didn't seem to matter. The mere act of talking had released a surge of energy. I felt capable of love—not love that wanted and hankered but love that accepted and gave. I felt that instead of trying to reclaim an old relationship I was on the threshold of something new, something fresh.

"I love you," I said. With surprise, I realized that in all the time I'd known her I hadn't said that to her—indeed, that I had never said it to any woman. My pride had always got in the way: I was loath to declare my feelings before I had a guarantee of complete acceptance. But it no longer seemed to matter whether she loved me back or not. I loved her in my new way.

She put her warm hand on my hand, which was resting on the kitchen table. "Will you believe me if I tell you I like you better than any other gentleman?"

"I do," I said, smiling at her use of the word "gentleman."

We embraced. We let go.

"I need you badly," I said.

"Or someone like me," she said, with a laugh.

"Or someone like you," I echoed, remembering Bud and the sailors, my ambitions, and the studies ahead of me.

"We have only a couple of months here," she said. "Let's pretend there are no differences between us."

"Let's," I said. I took her hands and concentrated on her gentle, soft voice, on her beautiful Southern drawl, on her enchanting, girlish laugh.

When I walked back to my room late that night, I felt happy. At that moment, Mary seemed to me Lahore, home, church. She had opened a locked door and invited me in, had served me tea and cinnamon toast, comforted me, and sent me on my way.

—Ved Mehta

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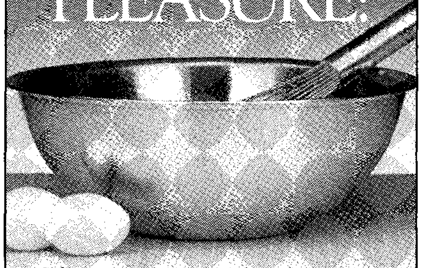

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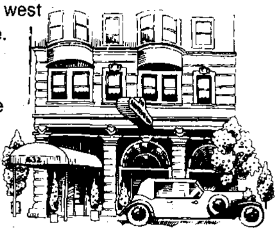

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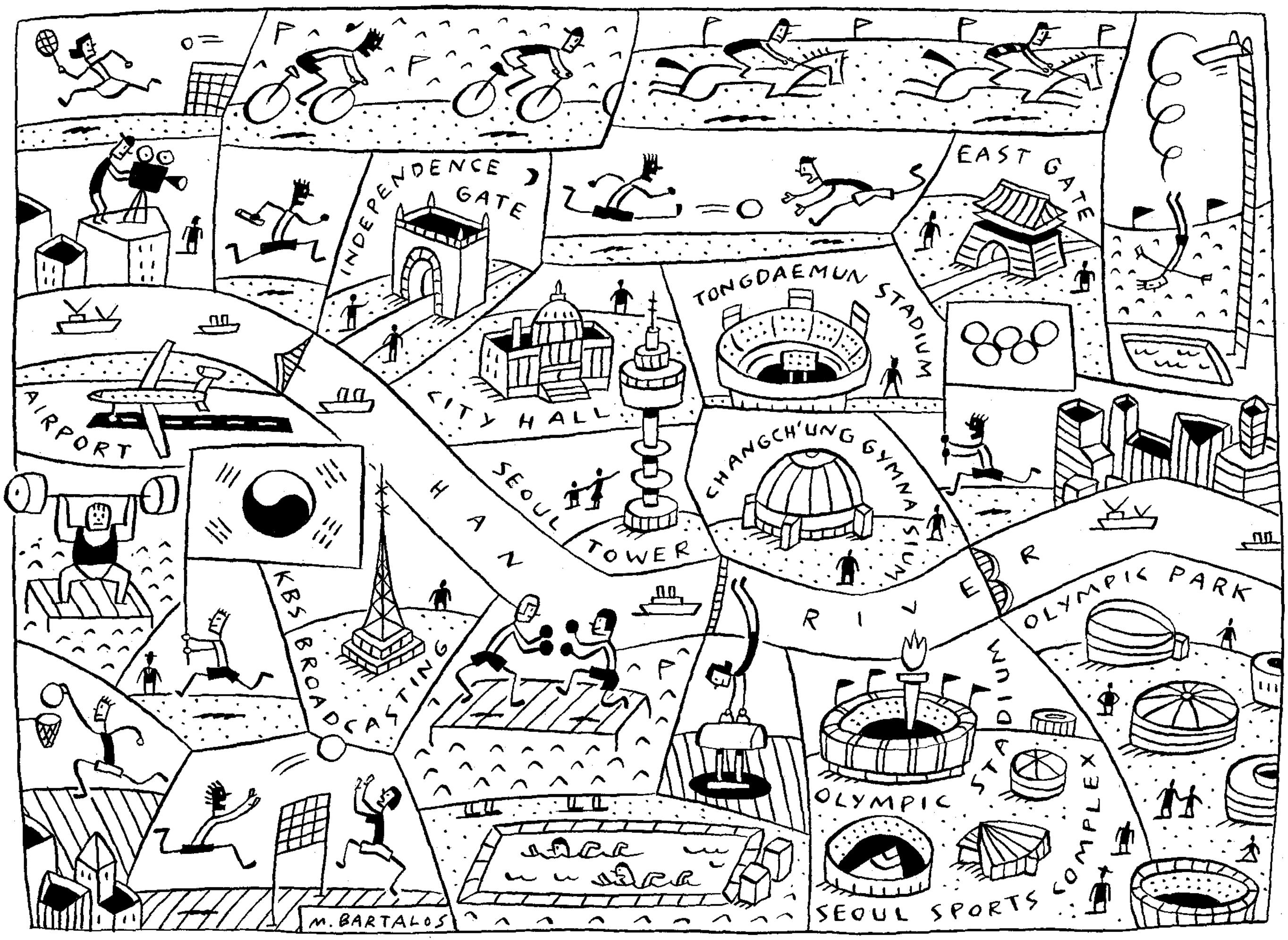

THE organizers of the Twenty-fourth Olympiad, looking for a theme that would set the Games at Seoul apart from earlier ones, hit upon the catchwords "harmony and progress." In this spirit, the Han River, which winds through the city, was apostrophized in a brochure distributed at the opening ceremony as representing "the harmony of mankind and the paths of progress leading to Seoul from around the world." A lot more symbolism was stressed on opening day. The hundred-thousand-seat stadium, its occupants were informed, was symbolic of Korea's long history, having been designed in the shape of a Yi-dynasty porcelain jar. Some spectators with a symbolic turn of mind reflected that three of the many colorful elements of the opening—a parade of ships on the Han, an overflight of five jets trailing smoke forming the five Olympic rings, and the descent right into the jar of a flock of parachutists—might represent the resolve of the organizers to guard against untoward incidents with, if need be, their country's naval, air, and ground forces.

Olympic Games—"a grand festival of mankind," the brochure proclaimed them—are put on not by nations but by cities. Seoul, which is a special kind of city—its ten million inhabitants are a quarter of South Korea's population—got the nod for the 1988 Games almost by default. When, back in 1981, the International Olympic Committee was entertaining proposals for them, the world's great municipalities were very much aware of the 1968 shootings in Mexico City, the Palestinian murders of Israelis at Munich in 1972, the African boycott of Montreal in 1976, the American boycott of Moscow four years later, and nearly all the Communist nations' snooting of Los Angeles in 1984. Nagoya was Seoul's only rival, and lost out even though the last unruffled Games had taken place in Japan—Tokyo's of 1964.

At the opening ceremony, on September 17th, spectators found radios and earplugs at their seats, and also colored cards, which they were invited to brandish on command to spell out "Harmony" and "Progress" and, in one section, to create the appropriate flag as each group of athletes marched in. (What would have happened if North Korea had decided at the very last minute to join the fray?) "You are the main cast of this festival of peace," the audience was informed. And that statement seemed at times, during the sixteen days of the Games, to apply to the whole city. I can recall no Games, from 1964 on, when the home folks seemed so eager to participate and to make everything come out all right. Exactly eight hundred thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine of them had toiled for seven years, visitors were told, to construct the big stadium. Other, untabulated workers had built additional state-of-the-art sports facilities, a new air terminal, and a subway system with a hundred and twenty-five stops (fare: starts at two hundred won, or about thirty cents), and had cleaned up the Han, broadened the streets, and lined them and most of the expressways leading to Seoul with attractive beds of flowers. As the Games fairly harmoniously progressed, nobody could exceed in dedication the men and women who plucked weeds and dead blossoms from those far-flung beds.

The word *seoul* means "capital" in Korean. The city has been that since 1392, just after the Yi dynasty began. Seoul had a population of only a million at the end of the Second World War, and the city was reduced to rubble during the Korean War. To produce these Olympics, the capital, which since the 1953 armistice has well earned the name Phoenix City of the Orient, had to commit itself to an outlay of more than three billion dollars; in 1976, it hadn't been able to afford the thirty-four million needed to put on the Asian Games. The Olympics have proved once and for all, in case there was any doubt, that Seoul has arrived. (Not, of course, that it hasn't had, along with its remarkable ups, its share of downs. Although many of these involved disaffected students, some nineteen thousand students were among the volunteers who helped make everything connected with the Games proceed pretty much according to schedule. When a handful of protesters of student age tried to stage a disruptive scene at the Seoul National University gym, where the Olympic table-tennis matches were held—a form of combat about as far removed from rec-room Ping-Pong as hurricane from breeze—older Korean ticket-holders outshouted them.) To sustain Seoul's legions of residents, trucks poured into town all night long. To curtail daytime vehicular traffic during the Games (dog-eating was also discouraged, out of deference to some foreigners' whimsical culinary preferences), odd-numbered private automobiles were allowed on the streets only on odd-numbered days, even-numbered on even. It was presently announced—this in round numbers—that the daily flow of cars had been reduced by two hundred and five thousand.

In a city so large and sprawling, there were areas, obviously, where the impact of the Games seemed small—around Myong-dong, for instance, in the center of town, with its narrow alleys, vegetable and fish stalls, and then, suddenly, as one turned a corner, Yves Saint Laurent and Charles Jourdan boutiques. The downtown stretch called It'aewon—itself a strange mélange of eelskin-purse venders and Dunkin' Donuts—was somewhat more Olympics-oriented; it beckoned to off-duty athletes just as it has long sought to attract tourists of every kind. There was undoubtedly some Potemkinization taking place throughout the city, but in more than three weeks I saw not a single beggar and just one man acting peculiarly on the subway.

In a report issued by the Asia Society on the eve of the Games, Gari Ledyard, a Columbia University professor of Korean history, after asserting that "nothing else in the world's calendar of events even comes close to the Olympics for sheer attractive power," noted that the Games offered "an unmatched opportunity to gain maximum exposure" for, among others, politicians, advertisers, and terrorists. The NBC coverage of the Games, we in Seoul heard at second hand, apparently helped the prediction about advertising come more or less true. As for terrorism, security was certainly tight, but most of the men and women who poked into our shoulder bags or patted us down at every entrance to most premises or walked contraband-sniffing dogs around or shoved mirrors under vehicles to make certain nothing or nobody was clinging to their undercarriages usually smiled as they went about their chores. What may have contributed more to the atmosphere of safety than all the thousands of uniformed and plainclothes sentinels, at least insofar as any interference from the government of absent North Korea was concerned, was the presence of that nation's major patrons, the Soviet Union and China. If the Games had been drug-free, they would have been largely trouble-free.

REGARDLESS of what went on at Myong-dong or It'aewon, it was, of course, the competitions—two hundred and thirty-seven events in twenty-three sports, plus several demonstration and exhibition sports—that mattered most. There were some nine thousand competitors, the largest number ever, from a record-setting hundred and sixty places—a few of these, like Guam and Puerto Rico, not even sovereign nations. (The concurrent gathering in New York of the General Assembly of the United Nations drew representatives of a hundred and fifty-nine entities.) Guam was making its Olympic début, along with Aruba, American Samoa, Burkina Faso, the Cook Islands, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Maldives, Brunei, Vanuatu, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Most of their athletes, like most of the others, stayed in the Olympic Village, an enclave of multistory apartment buildings, which, together with a press village abutting it, was to become very welcome citizens' housing after the fencers and cyclists and Greco-Roman wrestlers and rhythmic gymnasts and all the rest checked out. Like its predecessors, this Olympic Village was a bustling, bubbling settlement, where international relations were undoubtedly improved. Athletes tend to be heartier eaters than you and I; their most frequently voiced complaint was the length of time they had to stand in line to get adequately fed.

There were several localities in South Korea where events were held—yachting was down south at Pusan, for instance—but most took place in the vicinity of Seoul, and a good many within the city, at the Olympic Park and the Seoul Sports Complex. The former had been a deserted tract a decade ago, the latter a rice paddy and cabbage field. The Complex was the site of the main stadium, and the venues for boxing, basketball, baseball, and diving were within walking distance of the stadium. And the pedestrian traffic was something to marvel at, for an immense number of people gravitated to the scene—to the Olympic Park, too—apparently just to *be* there, whether they had tickets to anything or not, and maybe buy some kind of souvenir or, at one of the tidy food stalls, some smoked squid or seaweed rice balls or hot noodles. (The noodles were a bargain, at only three hundred won a nourishing plastic containerful—half the going price for the *International Herald Tribune.*) Entire families would roam around all day and well into the evening, frequently posing for snapshots against a backdrop of five huge Olympic rings or a bank of red and yellow flowers. Often, when somebody who looked like an Olympic athlete was spotted he or she would be asked shyly to pose with a child, and one could guess that a parent was saying the equivalent of "This is something you're going to want to remember when you're grown up."

Certainly few of us who were there will ever forget, at the diving pool of the Sports Complex, the sickening instant when the American Greg Louganis, coming uncharacteristically too close to the springboard on a reverse two-and-a-half pike, clipped the edge of it with his head. What a relief, after an interminable couple of seconds, to see him bob to the surface and climb out unassisted—and what a consummate performance when he went on, stitched scalp notwithstanding, to triumph in that event and in platform diving as well! At the end of even the most challenging midair acrobatics, Louganis, legs straight, toes pointed, slices the water as if determined not to make a ripple, and sometimes comes amazingly close to doing it. After anabolic steroids became a cause célèbre, he was asked if he'd ever sampled them. He smiled and shook his head and said, "The bigger you are, the bigger splash you make." One of the nice things about being at a diving contest is the good manners of the spectators. Even the unfortunates who roil the water with a belly flop usually get a round of applause when they come up for air.

Near the diving pool was the basketball court, where much attention was focussed on a probable matchup between the United States and the Soviet Union. They had not confronted each other in the Olympics since the finals at Munich, a contest long remembered because of a controversial two seconds added to the game clock, which enabled the Russians to score the crucial basket for a 51–50 victory over an American team that, along with its predecessors, had won sixty-two consecutive Olympic basketball games and never lost to anybody. In 1976—the last Olympics in which both countries participated—there had been no return confrontation, because Russia lost to Yugoslavia in the semifinals. Now, in Seoul, another head-on collision seemed likely, even if it should occur only in the semis. And that's what happened, and that's when the Russians astonished their opponents, and possibly themselves, by coming out on top, 82–76. Well, wait till '92.

The American basketball players at Munich, who thought they'd been robbed, refused to accept their second-place silver medals. An American boxer at Seoul, Roy Jones, would in most eyes have been perfectly justified for similarly spurning one; even many Koreans conceded that the judges who awarded a countryman of theirs a decision over Jones in the light-middleweight final bout had been, if not exactly blind, way off the beam. But, in an exceptional display of good sportsmanship, Jones resigned himself to his disappointment. That he should have been the victim of a miscall was all the more vexing because in an earlier fight, after he received some anti-American boos for knocking out an opponent, he quickly turned them to cheers by walking over to his again upright victim and embracing him in a fraternal, truly Olympian hug.

It was in that same boxing arena that another American, Arthur Johnson, after losing a close fight to a Korean, had said, "My dream is breaking up, and this is reality. I didn't want it to end this way. He was strong, and I have no argument with the decision. I fought the best fight I possibly could." Johnson probably deserved some sort of medal for that. The worst moment in boxing—one on which, Koreans complained, NBC dwelt at inordinate and indefensible length—came when a bunch of Koreans, annoyed at what they thought was a bum verdict against one of their brethren, stormed the ring and assaulted the referee, a New Zealander, prompting Seoul editorial writers to use adjectives like "shameful," "deplorable," and "abysmal." The Korean who lost sat sulkily in the ring for more than an hour afterward, and

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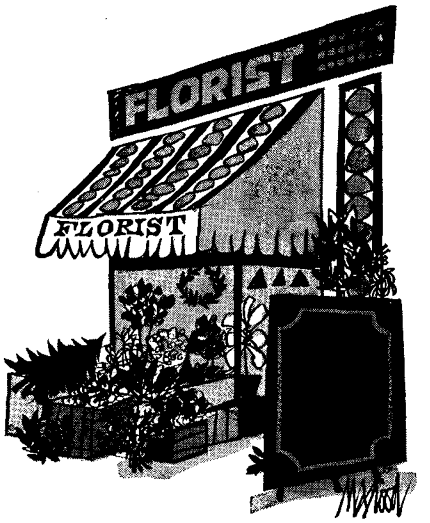
nobody dislodged him. The ref headed for home on the first available flight.

Down the Complex a bit was the baseball stadium. Baseball is slated to be a full-fledged Olympic offering in 1992, at Barcelona, but this year it had merely demonstration status, like women's judo and tae kwon do, the Koreans' own special martial art, in which double-pump barefoot kicks to the head are a popular weapon. (A thousand white-suited young adepts at tae kwon do gave an enthusiastically received demonstration of their specialty at the opening ceremony; they chopped inch-thick boards apart with their toughened hands and feet, and tidily picked up the pieces before departing.) Olympic baseball is notable for, among other things, the use of aluminum bats, and the unsettling clang they produce whenever a batter puts good metal, as it were, to the ball. Also, there's no seventh-inning stretch; at least, there wasn't on the day I went out to watch and admire the very special American southpaw Jim Abbott (he led the United States to victory over Japan in the gold-medal game), who fields almost as well as he pitches, though he has only one hand.

It was a six-hundred-yard stroll from baseball to the main stadium, where the track-and-field events—"athletics" in Olympic jargon—took place, and where Florence Griffith Joyner and Jackie Joyner-Kersee, making further formidable strides in their effort to become the "Guinness Book of World Records" choice as most talented sisters-in-law, dominated the hundred- and two-hundred-metre dashes, a relay or two, the long jump, the heptathlon, and, for all I know, some other event while my attention was diverted. Sometimes it was possible to watch them both in lithe action at the same time—Joyner-Kersee wrapping up the heptathlon, for example, while her brother's wife was setting a new record in the hundred. On being asked one day in Seoul how it was that she could run so fast, Florence G. J. said it wasn't from taking any old steroids, or anything like that—she had had to learn to outdistance boys when she was seven, because if she didn't her older brothers would catch her and beat up on her.

That extraordinary pair ran true to form, but there were plenty of surprises—so many that *Sports Illustrated*, which had been brave enough to predict the outcome of every event, was proved wrong in athletics more than half the time. Mary Decker Slaney, to whom the magazine gave a gold in the three-thousand-metre run and a silver in the fifteen hundred, was hoping for a comeback after her disastrous tangle with Zola Budd at Los Angeles, but she ran into traffic on the turns and finished eighth in the shorter of the two runs and tenth in the other. Then, there was the downfall of Willie Banks in the triple jump, of Daley Thompson in the decathlon, of Said Aouita in the eight hundred metres, and of thirty-three-year-old Edwin Moses in the four-hundred-metre hurdles, over which he had reigned—once taking a hundred and twenty-two races in a row—for an unprecedented twelve years. At Seoul, he could manage only a bronze. "They ran their best possible race," he said of his two conquerors, "and I didn't, and that's what the Olympics are all about." Or should be.

The track event that had most people most excited was, of course, the hundred-metre duel between the American Carl Lewis and the Jamaica-born Canadian Ben Johnson. Where else can one see history made in ten seconds, or a fraction less? The way Johnson exploded from the starting blocks, it was hard to imagine how any mortal could catch him, and Lewis, who was reported to have announced on arriving at Kimpo Airport, "I'll never lose to Johnson again," couldn't. But he ended up with the precious gold anyway, when Johnson's urine test proved positive for anabolic steroids. After the epic race, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney hastened to phone Johnson his and Canada's congratulations. At twenty-six, Johnson was well on his way to becoming a national hero, and—O rare Ben Johnson!—making a mint, when those interfering drug testers had to go and mess up his future. Whether he was plain stupid or had been advised that he could get by undetected we may never know, any more than we can know how many hundredths of a second, if any, he may have gained by his fraud. Toronto, his home town, is one of the contestants for the 1996 Games. (So is Athens, where the modern Olympics were launched, in 1896, and which has been making a strong centennial pitch.) I asked a Canadian who had come to Seoul to propagandize for Toronto whether the Johnson debacle would affect his city's prospects. "It sure as hell won't do any good," he said.



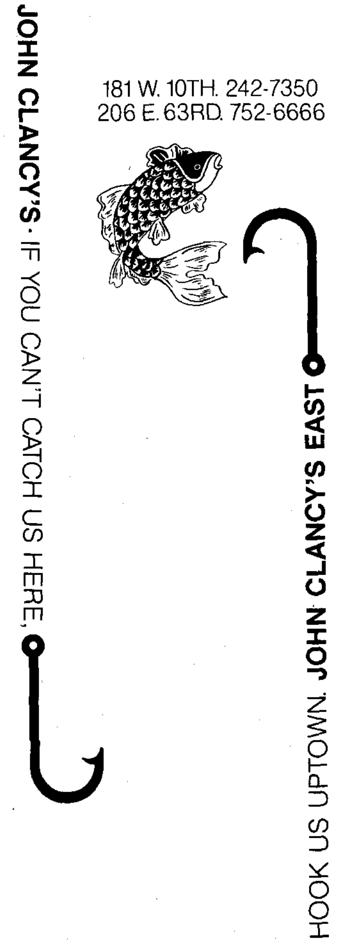
FOR the pleasure of visitors who like to combine running and jumping with more intellectual pursuits, Olympic hosts have traditionally set forth a generous display of cultural events. Seoul came up to snuff. Indeed, it took advantage of being center stage to welcome a number of people and institutions that until now, if they had been headed for any part of the Korean peninsula, would have turned up in P'yongyang. The Soviet Union has been so cool toward South Korea that it still doesn't consider it a sovereign state. For the Olympics, however, the Russians not only permitted Korean Air flights across their own territory but, for the first time, let both the Bolshoi Ballet and the Moscow Symphony perform in Seoul. The orchestra, in a spirit of harmony and progress, invited a Korean pianist to sit in with it, and, along with Beethoven's Ninth, rendered its own version of "Hand in Hand," the Olympic theme song, which was introduced at the opening ceremony and was reprised almost as often in the ensuing two weeks as were the Soviet and East German national anthems at medal ceremonies. Between them, those two giants bagged ninety-two golds, and of a total of seven hundred and thirty-nine medals of all kinds they took home two hundred and thirty-four. The United States fared respectably enough: "The Star-Spangled Banner" was heard thirty-six times—once, when a recording system malfunctioned, by means of impromptu vocalizing by the Americans on the spot.

At the Olympic Park, the other principal hub of competition—fencing, cycling, swimming, gymnastics, weight lifting—there was a truly ambitious and eye-catching cultural display: a hundred and twenty-seven works of sculpture by artists from sixty-seven countries were scattered about the grounds. As a fraternal gesture to North Korea, Cuba—along with its kissing cousins Albania, Nicaragua, Madagascar, Ethiopia, and the Seychelles—skipped the Games, but Fidel Castro apparently didn't ask to have removed from the art exhibit an abstract work by his own Augustin Cardenas, titled, not without irony in the circumstances, "Family." While the Games were on, Castro, we heard in Seoul, attempted to mollify the hundred and seventy-three Cuban athletes he had deprived of a shot at an Olympic medal by conferring on them Cuba's Order of Gold for his or her "dignified attitude" and "immense sense of patriotism and internationalism."

Weight lifting isn't customarily a really prominent Olympic sport, but at Seoul it came in for more than its usual share of attention. On the downside, there was a disqualification—drugs again—of two Bulgarian gold-medal winners and, in consequence, a huffy withdrawal of all the remaining Bulgarian musclemen from contention. On the upside, there was the performance—squeaky clean, by all reports and tests—of the twenty-one-year-old gold medallist in the hundred-and-thirty-two-pound division, Naim Suleymanoglu, who is four feet eleven inches of pure muscle. In front of a couple of thousand bug-eyed witnesses, he hoisted aloft more than three times his weight. Suleymanoglu was a Bulgarian, too, until a couple of years ago, when he defected to Turkey. He belongs to a clan of ethnic Turks, and became disenchanted with Bulgaria because the authorities there insisted that he take a Bulgarian name. Olympic eligibility when such shifts of allegiance occur calls for at least three years' residence in the new country unless the old one doesn't object. A Czech swimmer who had been in Stockholm only two years couldn't compete for Sweden, because Prague wouldn't consent. Turkey apparently paid Bulgaria a million dollars not to protest Suleymanoglu's participation at Seoul, and must have considered that sum well spent, for the gold he won was the first for Turkey in any event in twenty years. His present government dispatched the President's plane to Seoul to fetch him triumphantly home.

Over at the swimming pavilion, we were promised the aqueous near-equivalent of the Lewis-Johnson faceoff: a battle for supremacy in the two-hundred-metre freestyle between the United States' Matt Biondi and West Germany's Michael Gross. An interloper, Australia's Duncan Armstrong, proceeded to put them both in their places—third for Biondi, and for Gross an also-ran fifth. The No. 1 swimmer of these Olympics—also chosen as the Most Valuable Player of the Games—was East Germany's Kristin Otto, who ended up with six gold medals. *Sports Illustrated* had pre-awarded her a measly one. She seems to have only one flaw: she has let it be known that when she quits competing—she is, at twenty-two, getting on for a swimmer—she plans to become a journalist. If she does, four years from now she may be writing from Barcelona about Janet Evans, the tiny seventeen-year-old California high-school kid who took up swimming just after her first birthday and as a pseudo adult at Seoul romped off with golds in each of the three events she entered.

Ben Johnson, until his fall from grace, was Canada's only gold medallist. His country's best hope for another first, with the Games approaching their close, was clearly Carolyn Waldo, a twenty-three-year-old practitioner of the peculiar sport of synchronized swimming, which burst upon the Olympic horizon in 1984. Synchronized swimming, sometimes called synchro for short, is the oddly graceful exercise in which young women engage in gymnastics often while upside down with their heads under water. (The recorded music they cavort to is played fortissimo, so they can hear it while submerged.) Perhaps because of its outlandishness, it is an attention-getter: while ticket sales for other events were lagging, the main Olympic pool was ninety-nine per cent sold out for synchro. As Lewis and Johnson were generally considered to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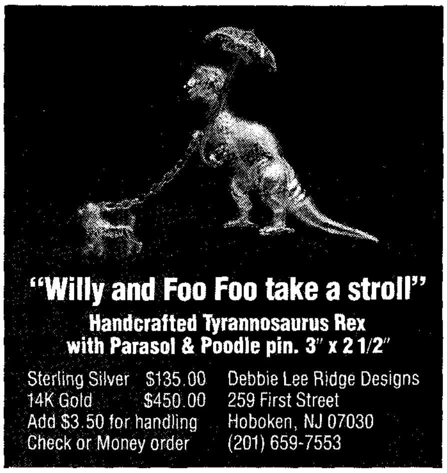
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be pretty much in a class by themselves, so were Carolyn Waldo and her archfoe, Tracie Ruiz-Conforto, the American who had outlegged her in the solo competition (there are duets, too) in 1984. Tracie had then retired, at twenty-one, but later changed her mind. Back in training—six hours a day, most days—she sometimes worked out in Florida with dolphins. (So did Matt Biondi, and he said afterward, "They taught me a lot about efficiency in the water and stroke technique.") Carolyn, who had taken Tracie's measure in a Cairo meet the previous October, acknowledged before they squared off at Seoul that she might be at a disadvantage, because Tracie had a better body. "What the judges really go for is a beautiful body," she said. Also, in her opinion, a smile—though it was hard to believe that the six stern-visaged women who handed down the synchro verdicts at Seoul knew what a smile was. "I've been working on my smile a lot, trying to make it look genuine," Carolyn said.

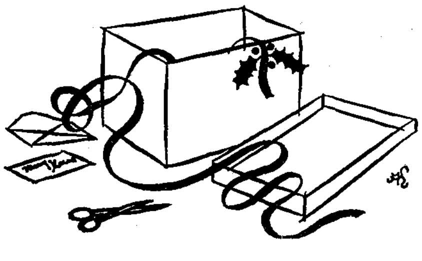
The eventual decisive confrontation between the two young women, both of them grinning away whenever they came up to breathe, was something of an anticlimax. Earlier, during their compulsory figures, Carolyn had built up a lead so seemingly irreducible that she herself said she was bound to win unless she drowned. She didn't, and she did, and those of us who watched the Maple Leaf being run up the center flagstaff felt that she had performed an act of redemption for a nation that had been cruelly and undeservedly betrayed.

IT was not much more than a good solid hop, skip, and jump from swimming to gymnastics, which, depending on whether men or women were engaging in their improbable calisthenics, was either a six- or a four-ring circus. (Considering the blithe manner with which young women essay back flips on narrow balance beams, it seemed a little farfetched to have a few of them enjoined by their coaches from entering the Olympic Village discothèque lest they hurt themselves.) An English-language pamphlet distributed by Sovetsky Sport Publishers noted:

> Anyway, just how are you supposed to keep an eye on four girls who perform *simultaneously at four different ends of the podium!* With men, it appears hopeless altogether: six equally lithe and handsome athletes, any one of whom is totally capable of showing the unimaginable, the impossible, the incredible, tear what is left of your ability to concentrate into little bits. Trying to take in as much as you can, you twist and turn this way and that, until in about an hour you experience alien spots before your eyes, and what feels like leaded weights in your neck. If that weren't enough, your ears ring with crackling shouts, "Steady!," which resound through the crowd almost every minute.

Is the sound a sigh or is it a groan when a momentarily unsteady gymnast falls off that infernal beam? Few mortals, I imagine, would dare try to stand on one, let alone use it as a launching and landing platform for a somersault. One sound that was blessedly missing from much of the gymnastics, except when the judges were egregiously foolish, was the boo.

Since 1952, when the Soviet Union joined the Olympic family, its gymnasts have won two hundred and fifty-nine medals, a hundred and twenty of them golds. The Russian women's team had triumphed every quadrennium up to 1984, when that honor went to Rumania, the only Eastern European country to ignore the Soviet abstention from Los Angeles. At Seoul, the Russians got back into their invincible stride, and one of the highlights along the way to their success was another duel between exceptional artists—the Russian Elena Chouchounova, who finished with four medals, and the Rumanian Daniela Silivas, with six. Every now and then, each would score a 10—perfection—on the same apparatus. The dark-haired Chouchounova, knowledgeable observers seemed to concur, was the steadier and more businesslike and conventional (if the latter words can be applied to such high-flying magic) of the two, and the fairer Silivas the more unconventional and flamboyant and innovative. One onlooker got so carried away admiring the pair in surefooted action that he likened them to two angels dancing on the head of a pin. In any case, Elena's and Daniela's co-starring performances deprived the 1988 Games of a chance to add to gymnastic annals a solo complement of Olga and Nadia and Mary Lou.



The American gymnastic group was harshly deprived of a bronze when it was penalized because an eagle-eyed East German official had spotted an alternate on the United States team watching from a spot at the edge of the podium, where technically she shouldn't have perched. That inadvertent misdemeanor cost the United States half a point, which in gymnastics can be a whopping amount. In more than one Olympic competition, indeed, the margins of victory have become almost implausibly tiny. In platform diving, the masterly Louganis edged out the Chinese Xiong Ni (who was two years old in 1976, when Greg made his first Olympic appearance) by no more than 638.61 points to 637.47. When Kristin Otto won the fifty-metre freestyle, the difference in time between her gold-medal sprint and that of the eighth-place booby-prize winner was a hair over half a second. Carl Lewis lost his two-hundred-metre duel with his compatriot Joe DeLoach by four-hundredths of a second. Anthony Nesty, of Suriname, who when he won the hundred-metre butterfly became the first black ever to capture an Olympic swimming event, nipped Biondi by precisely one one-hundredth of a second. The ancient Greeks, who started all this, and who told time by the sun, might have called that a draw.

At Seoul, only fifty-two delegations won a medal of any denomination. That meant, of course, that a hundred and eight were shut out. One American may have introduced his auditors to a new verb when he said, "I was a little disappointed in the fact I didn't medal. Medalling is such a big deal here." It was such a big deal for another American that when he realized he stood to win only—only!—a bronze he threw himself down on the mat. Thus it was refreshing to hear what may have been the wisest, most sensible, most heartening, most Olympian, and most mature post mortem to emerge from the Games. It was voiced by a fifteen-year-old American gymnast, Brandy Johnson, who said, shortly after her event was over, "To be tenth in the world means a lot."

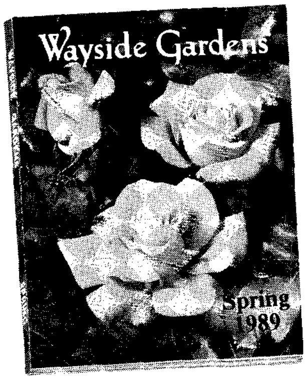
SEOUL'S Summer Olympics didn't get under way until mid-September, because the weather there is predictably sizzling through August. Consequently, the Twenty-fourth Olympiad embraced two holidays. One was Yom Kippur, and some Israeli athletes didn't compete that day. The second was Chusok, a Thanksgiving-like day in Korea which is consecrated to ancestor worship. Koreans take offerings of food and drink—plum wine and half-moon-shaped rice cakes stuffed with beans, chestnuts, dates, et al.—to family graves. Two million inhabitants of Seoul headed for their family homes outside the city. At the Olympic Village, Korean athletes who couldn't take time off from training or competition were reported to have expressed, in the theoretical presence of *their* ancestors, "our unwavering will to fight to the limit of our possibilities so that we may reach our goal of obtaining six gold medals or even more, and in doing so we will bring great pride and joy to our ancestors and to our entire nation." Stephano Cardinal Kim Soowhan said Mass in the Village on Chusok and—pushing harmony and progress about as far as they could go—hoped that all within earshot would earn golds in righteousness, friendship, and peacemaking.

At Seoul, a good deal of attention was focussed on the progress of harmonious relations between the host country and Japan, which had held Korea in colonial bondage from 1910 to 1945. Hard feelings last a long time. "Sure, it's been over forty years since the Japanese got thrown out of here," one Korean in his fifties told me, "but the older ones among us remember those days well, and they were the teachers of my generation." Although many Japanese tourists visit Korea these days, hardly any Japanese theatre or music was performed there before the Olympics, and a visit of one troupe for the cultural enhancement of the Games inspired a newspaper headline in Seoul reading, "COARSE KABUKI SHOW FAILS TO IMPRESS. . . . JAPANESE ART FORM STIRS UP BITTER MEMORIES FOR KOREAN AUDIENCES." During the opening ceremony, the Japanese chose to seem much the more conciliatory of the two long-estranged countries. Most of the Japanese athletes entering the stadium clutched a rose of Sharon, Korea's national flower. A few minutes later, on the other hand, the ceremonial Olympic torch was carried in by Korea's national hero Sohn Kee Chung, the seventy-six-year-old who in 1936 won the Olympic marathon at Berlin but was compelled by his Japanese overlords to run under their flag—and under their name for him, too, which was Kitei Son. Fifty-two years later, a columnist in the English-language *Korea Herald* wrote, "In the primers about the Land of Morning Calm I doubt that they told you that they would rather beat a Japanese athlete than eat for a week."

Just about the most vociferous and flag-wavingest bunch of spectators I mingled with at Seoul were those watching Japan's women's volleyball team defeat Korea, 8–15, 15–3, 15–11, 15–8. The third set was the crucial one and was especially galling for the Koreans because they were ahead 6–0 before collapse set in. Well, the Japanese were older—average age 23.8 to 21.3—and I suppose experience paid off. By the time the Games were over and all the awards had been totted up, however, the Land of Morning Calm, which at the outset had aspired to no more than those six gold medals, had a dozen of them and thirty-three of all kinds, whereas the Land of the Rising Sun had only four golds in a comparatively skimpy bag of fourteen.

MORE than forty thousand American troops are stationed in South Korea. This massive presence was far less visible during the Games than it might have been, for the G.I.s had been instructed to blend inconspicuously into the scene by wearing mufti when they were off duty. Anti-Americanism was prevalent. That *Korea Herald* columnist had also written that, for Koreans, "if a Japanese is not there to root against, an American is an acceptable substitute." Two teen-age sons of United States soldiers hadn't helped: they had been caught beating up a pregnant Korean. When the Games were well under way, one slightly older American Olympic swimmer contributed his own dubious bit: during a drunken celebration of a gold-medal haul, he was caught swiping a piece of statuary from a hotel. Next—sensitivity was mounting—a solitary American athlete was severely criticized for kicking a taxicab. Worst of all, perhaps, had been the behavior of some of the American contingent during the opening ceremony. They broke ranks during the parade of athletes and horsed around to such an extent that they all but swallowed up the eight-person delegation from Vanuatu, directly behind them. The United States Olympic Committee at first tried to pass this off as mere youthful exuberance, but the I.O.C. was less forgiving, calling it "scandalous" and informing the U.S.O.C. that the cutups had "given the whole world a very bad impression of your delegation."

Some of the American soldiers in Korea are stationed near Taegu, a couple of hundred miles southeast of Seoul, where several Olympic football games (our soccer) were played. I travelled down there one day to see the United States take on the Soviet Union. (Wherever we stopped along the spic-and-span expressway, we would come upon Koreans glued to television sets watching the Games—*their* Games.) At the entrance to the football stadium, I was handed a button that FIFA—the acronym for the French name of the international federation governing the sport—evidently felt it advisable to dispense to all spectators. The button read "FAIR PLAY." The stadium, which seats thirty thousand, was about two-thirds full, with quite a few servicemen and their dependents on hand. (A sergeant and his wife had topped off their prescribed mufti with tall Uncle Sam hats, as if posing for a recruiting poster.) Across one row of lower-tier seats was spread a banner in Russian, which a foreign journalist translated: "We must play well—Russian Supporters Group. The Russian athletes must strive for victory." They got it, 4–2, but not before some Yanks in the crowd—one of whose "USA! USA!" placards partly obscured an exhortative "HARMONY, PROGRESS" banner—had booed the referee for calling a foul on an American who had committed a flagrant one. Although the Russian team won the game, the Americans scored with at least part of the audience in public relations: just before play began, they unfurled and waved a Korean flag. There was more fair play on the field, all in all, than in the stands. At one point, a Russian and an American collided, and both fell to the ground. Possibly the Games' "Hand in Hand" theme song was going



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through their heads: each stuck out a hand, and helped the other back to his feet.

Among the non-athletes at Seoul were some scientists examining how different cultures handle victory and defeat. Their findings may turn out to be skewed if they were unaware that the organizers, in a commendable attempt to arrange for all the contestants to hear *some* cheers, corralled a bunch of students to act as claques for those without many compatriots around to spur them on. At Taegu, several dozen such recruits lent the Russians and the Americans their lungs. During the boxing competitions, as the contestants changed from bout to bout I heard lusty cries of "Ja-mai-ca!" and "Ec-ua-dor!" emerge from the same area at the same volume. Who can say: would Peru's women's volleyball team—even discounting its six-foot-four-inch spiker, who with her feet off the floor and her arm raised to strike must have looked to her opponents across the net like a spaceship at liftoff—have eliminated the United States from contention if a chorus of Koreans who had almost certainly never been to Lima hadn't been rooting for the victors?

EURIPIDES has been quoted as having said, "Out of the tens of thousands of ills in Greece, nothing is worse than the tribe of professional athletes." By now, of course, the gap between amateurs and professionals, insofar as the Olympics are concerned, has all but vanished. Carl Lewis and Ben Johnson not so long ago split half a million dollars for going head to head in a meet at Zurich. Big-shot athletes of their calibre rake in unlimited "appearance fees," which can buy a lot of track shoes, but, of course, don't have to, because the athletes also have endorsement contracts with shoemakers. No Filipino has ever won an Olympic gold medal, but if one had done so at Seoul he or she would have come into a cool million pesos—forty-seven thousand dollars—from the Philippine government. Taiwan's comparable purse, also unclaimed, was a hundred and forty thousand dollars. A Nepalese who earned a bronze in tae kwon do received forty-five hundred dollars from his appreciative king. The diminutive Turkish weight lifter Suleymanoglu, even before his triumph, was enjoying an apartment, a car, and a thousand a month. Korea's gold medallists assured themselves of at least

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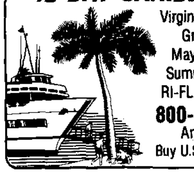

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that much for life. And so it went. Americans have not yet received bonuses, but Soviet bonuses—"reimbursement for the labor that was the basis of victory" is how one of their team officials put it—were pegged at roughly the equivalent of nineteen thousand dollars for a gold medal, ten thousand for a silver, and sixty-four hundred for a bronze. Shopkeepers in Myong-dong and It'aewon gladly take dollars instead of won, but *rubles*? What made these purses all the more alluring was that fifteen per cent of each was handed out at Seoul in spendable, American hard currency.

That opening-day brochure had asserted, with unqualified confidence, that the Seoul Games would be "the Olympics of the greatest participation, supreme harmony, best results and optimum security and service." All things considered, by the time the torch was snuffed out and the last flag lowered, the organizers had come praiseworthily close to achieving their lofty goals. (Juan Antonio Samaranch, the Pooh-Bah of the I.O.C., whose objectivity is, of course, moot, acclaimed them "the best and most universal Games in our history.") When the Games were over, shortly before both South and North Korea appeared before the U.N. General Assembly—where their observer status is roughly equivalent to that of an Olympic demonstration sport—we were happy to hear in Seoul that at the instigation of the Soviet Union there was going to be a bilateral meeting in Moscow with the United States to discuss the nagging question of drugs and sports and what to try to do about it. "The time has come," said Marat Gramov, the head of the Soviet Olympic Committee, "for National Olympic Committees to assume the responsibility in tackling this issue." It was announced that the dethroned but still much admired hurdler Edwin Moses would be an American participant in the talks, and that the Russian contingent would include the gold-medal-winning pole vaulter Sergey Bubka. Whatever eventually results from this get-together, how appropriate that the effort to achieve some harmony and progress where it was sorely needed should have been in part entrusted to two men who had ime and time again, with skill and strength and grace, demonstrated their ability to clear formidable obstacles in heir path!

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LISTS AT THIS SEASON SOME BOOKS BY ITS CONTRIBUTORS PUBLISHED DURING THE YEAR

(All or a considerable part of the contents of each of these volumes first appeared in this magazine.)

A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam, by Neil Sheehan (*Random House, $24.95*).

John Vann arrived in Saigon in 1962 as a military adviser and was killed, ten years later, while serving as the de-facto commander of the United States and South Vietnamese military forces in the Central Highlands. By that time, Mr. Sheehan writes, Vann had become "the one irreplaceable American in Vietnam." But Vann, as Mr. Sheehan presents him, was far too complicated and interesting a man to be viewed as simply a symbol—except, perhaps, of sheer physical courage. His private life was a catastrophe of marital deceits and betrayals. In his public life, he struggled resolutely and brilliantly to instill a will to fight in the Saigon forces. By his efforts, he may, single-handed, have prolonged a war whose outcome appears to have been inevitable.

The World of George Price: A 55-Year Retrospective (*Beaufort, $24.95*).

This generous selection, more than three hundred drawings, from approximately two thousand that Mr. Price has produced for *this magazine*, demonstrates that the Master's line has lost none of its edge. His familiar misfits, wiseacres, harridans, and sourballs are all here. Alistair Cooke has provided a witty introduction.

Paris Notebooks: Essays and Reviews, by Mavis Gallant (*Random House, $17.95*).

Nearly two decades' worth of Mrs. Gallant's sharp observation and appraisal of two fascinating species—the French (Parisians in particular) and writers. Much of the book is given over to a journal of the French student uprising in 1968 and to the story of Gabrielle Russier, a lycée teacher who had an affair with one of her students, was arrested and held without a trial, then tried in secret and released with a suspended sentence. The prosecution immediately filed an appeal, and Russier took her own life. Shorter pieces include unhappy commentary on new Parisian architecture, reviews of such writers as Grass, Nabokov, and de Beauvoir, and a brief discussion of literary style: it is not "a charming and universal slipcover, a coat of paint" but "a true voice." A voice like Mrs. Gallant's, that is.

Great Wits, by Alice Mattison (*Morrow, $16.95*).

Small-town stories (it's New Haven) about intelligent families, friends, colleagues, couples, children, and lovers, who talk, laugh, break apart, make plans, fix meals, argue, and change as they work out (alone or together) their close, self-demanding lives.

A Book of Bees, by Sue Hubbell (*Random House, $17.95*).

For fifteen years, Sue Hubbell has kept bees in the Missouri Ozarks, and this account of a beekeeper's year is a distillation of her experience. She is clearly preoccupied with practicality, and much of her book is straight practical information: how a hive is assembled and maintained, how to get along with bees, the economics of beekeeping. But she has also found time to ruminate, often wryly, on the moral questions that bees seem to inspire in their observers, and to record the details of a daily life that is obviously fulfilling.

Rachel and Her Children, by Jonathan Kozol (*Crown, $16.95*).

Within the past decade, the homeless population of America has increased enormously and has enrolled thousands of formerly self-reliant families who have been priced out of contemporary life. In New York City, the homeless often wind up in the Dickensian squalor of a welfare hotel. One such place, the Martinique, forms the setting for Mr. Kozol's book. Mostly, he allows the victims to speak for themselves, telling how it feels to watch helplessly while one's family is put through the shredder of the welfare system.

Shapinsky's Karma, Boggs's Bills, by Lawrence Weschler (*North Point, $17.95*).

Six "passion pieces," as the author calls them, about people in the grip of various kinds of artistic obsession. The subjects are Akumal Ramachander, whose karma it is to bring fame to neglected artists; Knud Jensen, the director of Denmark's Louisiana Museum; Art Spiegelman, the creator of the underground-comic classic "Maus;" Leonard Durso, an idealistic young bookseller; Nicolas Slonimsky, the world's foremost music lexicographer; and J. S. G. Boggs, a young artist who draws paper money and then attempts to spend it.

The Four Elements, by Roz Chast (*Harper & Row, $8.95*).

Further meticulously recorded communiqués from Ms. Chast's alternative universe: a world saner and wiser than our own.

American Singers, by Whitney Balliett (*Oxford, $19.95*).

A reissue together with a new foray in Mr. Balliett's explorations of jazz. He has added thirteen new "portraits" to his collection of a decade ago, bringing the total to twenty-seven. Alphabetically speaking, the span is from Tony Bennett to Julie Wilson; musically speaking, it's immeasurable. The book opens with an extended Profile of Alec Wilder, who shed light, directly or indirectly, on every singer here assembled.

Stories in an Almost Classical Mode, by Harold Brodkey (*Knopf, $24.95*).

A hefty, handsomely printed volume of eighteen stories, all but one never collected before. Among them are "Innocence"—a story that became a cause célèbre back in the early seventies and is just as startling today—and the latest installments in Mr. Brodkey's history of Wiley Silenowicz and family. Because the stories are arranged in order of composition, advanced Brodkeyites will be able to trace recurring images and themes and to follow the evolution of this particularly rigorous and imaginative brand of near-classicism.

Post- to Neo-, by Calvin Tomkins (*Holt, $19.95*).

Mr. Tomkins reports on the art world of the nineteen-eighties, as it has unfolded (sometimes explosively) around him. His discussion deals both with styles and schools—from the wildly successful neo-expressionists to the lonely practitioners of earth art—and with artists' increasing involvement with fashion, public relations, real estate, etc.

Season Ticket, by Roger Angell (*Houghton Mifflin, $18.95*).

The seasons ticketed here are those from 1983 through 1987, and the vivid baseball events chronicled include the rise and miserable fall of the '84 Cubs; the bitter all-Missouri finals of '85; and the now legendary war between the Mets and the Red Sox in October of '86. The book also includes Angell's reports on spring camps and midsummer campaigns; Profiles of an exemplary executive (Roy Eisenhardt, of the Oakland A's) and a quirky submariner (Dan Quisenberry); a stopover at Cooperstown; and a couple of extended seminars on the difficult arts of catching and playing infield.

Dateline Soweto: Travels with Black South African Reporters, by William Finnegan (*Harper & Row, $18.95*).

The black journalists who write for the South African press face almost insurmountable odds: editors and publishers who are unduly interested in advertising demographics; factionalized activist groups; street mobs quick to lynch outsiders; and a government that will stop at nothing to stay in power. Nevertheless, the reporters keep reporting, and Mr. Finnegan, who is white, accompanies them into frightening, almost dreamlike situations, where, he demonstrates, they do their work not only with honesty but with grace and humor.

Out on the Marsh, by David Updike (*Godine, $16.95*).

Fifteen stories that trace a young man's passage from home and childhood into the larger world and to the edge of adulthood. The dominant theme is love, the dominant mood a cheerful bittersweetness, and the method one of careful attention to particulars. Seven of the stories first appeared in *The New Yorker*.

Europeans, by Jane Kramer (*Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $22.95*).

The men and women who people Miss Kramer's Europe are all held morally accountable by her. Among those who fall short are Austrians who defend Kurt Waldheim; respectable center-right French politicians who cut deals with the neo-Fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen; and fashionable Milanese businessmen who let themselves be swindled by an intellectual charlatan. For those who pass muster—one is a young African from Cameroon who makes his first guitar out of twigs and rope and rusty bicycle wires and eventually finds himself in Paris with a rock group called Ghetto Blaster—her admiration is generous and complex.

John Cardinal O'Connor, by Nat Hentoff (*Scribners, $19.95*).

Within the past four and a half years, John O'Connor has become Archbishop of New York, a cardinal, and perhaps the best-known and most controversial American Catholic cleric. While most of his better-publicized battles have come about because of his religious orthodoxy and his undeviating support for the Pope, he has also, as Mr. Hentoff points out, been an advocate for labor and the handicapped and has opposed the Administration's policy in Central America. This biography points out how the Cardinal's presence at the center of so many activities has served to affect the changing American branch of the Church.

Believe Them, by Mary Robison (*Knopf, $15.95*).

The settings of these eleven stories are various and captivating (children driving a car in a snowstorm; a woman on horseback in midsummer; a painfully intelligent teen-age girl in a convent-school band; a young widow trying to get through winter), and the prose produces moments that startle, catch light, and cut deep.

The Yellow Wind, by David Grossman (*Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $17.95*).

This book, translated, from the Hebrew, by Haim Watzman, is the result of a three-month sojourn in the occupied territory of the West Bank which was undertaken in 1987 by Mr. Grossman, a young Israeli novelist. He visited schools, homes, workplaces, courtrooms, and refugee camps and spoke to Jews and Arabs, and he gained enough of their confidence that they poured out to him what they really thought and felt: their hatreds, frustrations, hopes, anguish. Although the Palestinians have borne the material weight of defeat, Mr. Grossman makes it clear that the spiritual effects of this extended tragedy are as disastrous for the occupiers as for the occupied.

The Gang's All Here, by Michael Maslin (*Fireside, $5.95*).

High jinks, low puns, and innocent merriment characterize Mr. Maslin's world, where husbands have the right to remain silent, talking dogs never shut up, and no one counts calories. One hundred and fifty cartoons, of which fifty-eight first appeared here.

Dangerous Dossiers, by Herbert Mitgang (*Donald I. Fine, $18.95*).

For most of this century, American security officials—most notably the F.B.I.—have systematically compiled records of people they think might represent a danger to the state, and for some reason intellectuals in general and writers and artists in particular have especially engaged their suspicions. Mr. Mitgang, cultural correspondent of the *Times*, here reveals the details of that surveillance. Sinclair Lewis, Pearl Buck, Tennessee Williams, W. H. Auden, Thornton Wilder, Truman Capote—the suspects are as diverse as their talents, and their inclusion is testimony to the paranoia or the gullibility of the feds. This noxious list-keeping seems to have reached its peak in the J. Edgar Hoover era, but, as Mr. Mitgang points out, the practice has not ceased.

Love Trouble Is My Business, by Veronica Geng (*Harper & Row, $15.95*).

Twenty-four comic-parodic casuals about Alternative History, Lyndon Johnson's barbecue for George Bernard Shaw, a Pentagon expense account for dog-boarding, and the like (and *not*-like), interspersed with a more personal text about friends, the news, and the ways one sometimes gets around to writing a casual.

The New Yorker Book of War Pieces (*Schocken, $24.95*).

The war is the Second World War, and this collection of dispatches, first published in 1947 and long out of print, begins with a report from London (9/3/39) by Mollie Panter-Downes and ends with one from Hiroshima (8/31/46) by John Hersey. In between, to pick just a few, news arrives rom France, by way of Janet Flanner and, n report after report, A. J. Liebling; from New Guinea, by E. J. Kahn, Jr.; from Okinawa, by John Lardner; and from Rome and Berchtesgaden, by Philip Hamburger. The ontents—seventy pieces, by twenty-two eporters—were chosen by the editors of *The New Yorker*.

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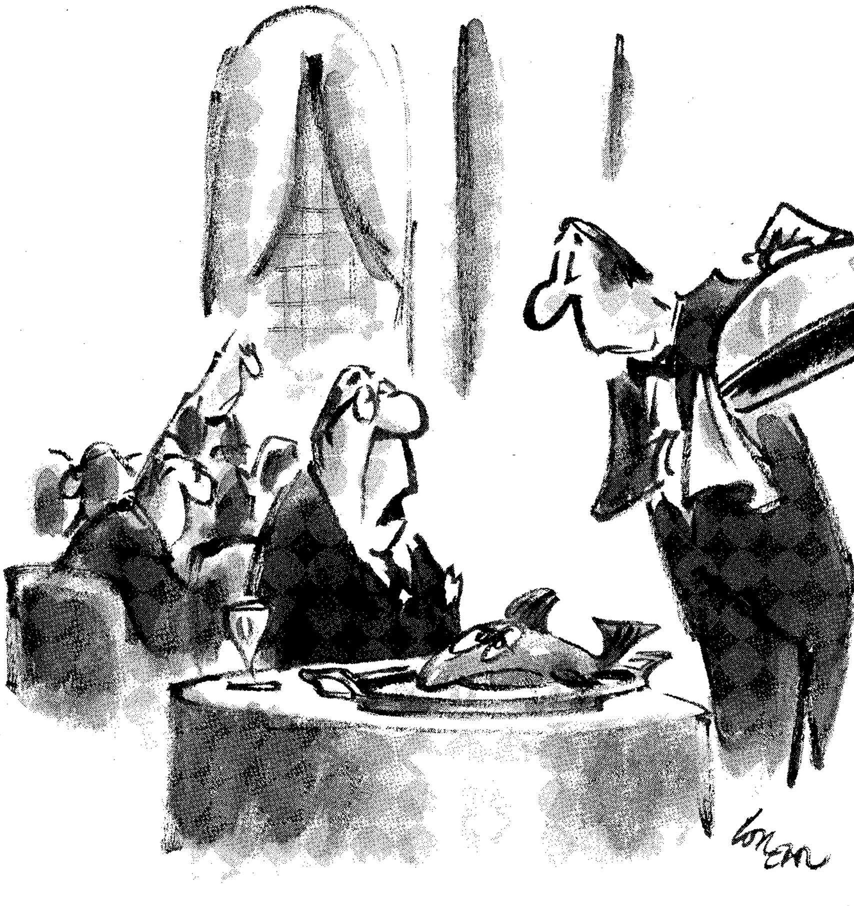
THE THEATRE

Whose Town?

THORNTON WILDER'S "Our Town" originally opened at the Henry Miller on February 4, 1938, and I happened to be there, totally unprepared for the play; William Roerick, a friend of mine in the company (assistant stage manager, baseball player in the wedding scene), had asked me not to read any of the out-of-town notices. As I walked into the auditorium and sat down, I saw that the curtain was up on a bare stage with just a work light on. "I didn't realize we were that early," I said to whoever was sitting next to me. Soon a man who looked like a stagehand ambled out (house lights down, stage lights up); he turned to us and said, "This play is called 'Our Town;' it was written by Thornton Wilder and produced and directed by Jed Harris." He named the actors, and arranged a few chairs and tables as he described Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, in 1901, subtly drawing us in. The man was, of course, Frank Craven, as the Stage Manager, in a performance so indelible that his is the voice I'll always hear in the role, although there have been other fine Stage Managers in revivals—Henry Fonda and John Beal and Marc Connelly and Mr. Wilder himself, to name a few. The performances of the other actors were in every instance worthy of the script. The evening was so overwhelming that I don't even remember the final curtain; I came to at about 4 A.M. near a newsstand in Times Square, waiting with a couple of actors in the company for the review in the *Trib.* I knew then—still do—that "Our Town" was the best modern play I had seen or would see. "Best" is the best I can do at the moment; for a more eloquent evaluation, I refer you to the late Donald Malcolm, who covered a revival for this magazine in 1959. He wrote, " 'Our Town' is an oddly artless work of art that solves the special problems of the theatre by ignoring them. Its author, Thornton Wilder, is much like an acrobat who modestly declines to try anything as difficult as walking the tightwire and is content simply to dance along the same route on thin air. . . . The episodes are seldom momentous. The inhabitants of Grover's Corners, as they freely confess, are not extraordinary people. Their concerns are small ones. . . . It is, once again, the Stage Manager who rescues them from triviality. His remarks unite them to the history of their times, and to a fundamentally tragic sense of the fragility of life."

On the evening of December 4, 1988, "Our Town" lay inert on the stage of the Lyceum. That this should be so is principally the result of the preposterous casting of Spalding Gray in the role of the Stage Manager. Mr. Gray, whom I've seen only once before, in a monologue of singular fatuity about building himself a house in the country, gives no indication that he understands the part or would be able to act it even if he did. His deportment blights the show from the start, depriving it of unity and of its humorous gravity and emotion. The other members of the company, perhaps lacking proper guidance, or perhaps just in shock, seem to be in several different plays, despite a few telling moments and indications of talent. Sets by Douglas Stein, costumes by Jane Greenwood, lighting by Kevin Rigdon, all admirable. Gregory Mosher directed. Note: Dear Roberta Maxwell and Peter Maloney, thank you for being in "Our Town."

—EDITH OLIVER



"I understood it was to be appropriately garnished."

Theatre from Down Under

"EMERALD CITY," at the Perry Street Theatre, is David Williamson's play about a successful screenwriter, Colin (Daniel Gerroll), and the difficulties he and his wife have in adjusting when they move from Melbourne to Sydney. Mr. Williamson is himself a successful screenwriter (he wrote the scripts for "The Year of Living Dangerously" and "Gallipoli," and also adapted several of his own plays for the screen) who at one time relocated to Sydney.

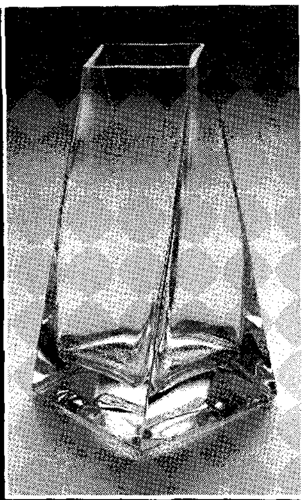
"Emerald City" begins with Colin and Kate (Gates McFadden) sharing their views on the move to Sydney with each other and with the audience. Kate is afraid they'll be lonely among the cynical materialists of Australia's entertainment capital, but Colin is out of patience with the hypocrisies of their left-wing-intellectual friends back in Melbourne. At a cocktail party, he meets Mike (Dan Butler), a boorish young hustler who wants to break into the film industry. Mike, playing on Colin's ego and insecurities, suggests that shaking himself free of his producer and going out on his own will give Colin greater control over his work and a bigger piece of the profits. Kate, who is also having career problems, disapproves of Colin's sudden yen for money and power as well as of his decision to collaborate with Mike on a film project, and for a while both marriage and play seem headed for a crisis. But everything piffles out. Colin and Kate come to terms with the commercialism of the Emerald City, and Colin learns a sort of inside-out version of what Dorothy learns: that if he wants to go looking for corrupting demons he'll have to start closer to home.

"Emerald City" sounded promising, both as a window on contemporary Australia and as a comedy of ideas. Unfortunately, it sounds better than it plays. This is partly because the basic point Williamson is making about Australia—that it apes the West culturally—is not very interesting. (His one other insight into upper-middle-class Australian life has to do with the horrors of a twenty-four-hour Qantas flight.) Oddly, the play shows signs of the very sense of inferiority and cultural jet lag that are its main targets. It wants us to laugh with Colin at the dated trendiness of "Chardonnay socialists." But Red-bashing is itself passé: Tom Stoppard did it in "The Real Thing," five seasons ago.

In fact, "Emerald City" often seems like an Australian *hommage* to "The Real Thing"—but written in the manner of Michael Frayn's "Benefactors." Like Stoppard's play, Williamson's is about a successful writer driven by the idiocies of an uncomprehending world to question the merits of what he writes; like Frayn's play, it relies on characters' stepping momentarily out of the action and addressing the audience. But Frayn used the device of shifting points of view to weave labyrinthine complexities of irony and motivation. The ironies in Williamson's play are all linear: they're reversals of fortune rather than of perception. And the play is very repetitive. There are too many cocktail-party scenes, too many references to oceanfront property and harbor views, too many instances of Colin sounding off to his wife. We get not one but two Qantas jokes, not one but two comic tirades from the hero about how immensely rich and powerful he wants to become. There are lines that jangle ("You're about as ruthless as a toothless old pussycat"), and lines that take too long to arrive at a simple thought ("Mike is so insensitive he'd be hard put to spot the irritation on the face of a charging tiger"), and lines we feel we don't need to hear ("Prime-time television in America is to art what McDonald's is to cooking"). Given the way Williamson's hero carries on about artistic freedom, it's ironic that what "Emerald City" needs most is an editor.

Stronger direction by R. J. Cutler—a swifter pace and a higher level of energy—might have kept so comparatively long and monotonous a play from becoming tiresome; similarly, cleverer design might have helped to cloak the play's structural weakness, by imposing unities it doesn't in fact possess. (James Youmans' set, which evokes various office and living-room spaces, does little more than provide locales for Kenneth Posner's lighting to ferry characters between.) Ultimately, though, the play fails because Williamson's self-referential hero doesn't stand for anything beyond autobiography. In spite of Daniel Gerroll, whose deeply felt and often ingenious deliveries manage to give some of Colin's pronouncements the weight of Stoppardian aperçus, the hero is just another writer looking for a subject, passionate only in his desire for success and acclaim.

With the exception of Doris Belack, who plays Colin's producer and can't manage the Australian accent, the other members of the cast also perform admirably—particularly Miss McFadden, to whom the worst lines fall, and Mr. Butler, who proves a worthy antagonist for Mr. Gerroll. But one wishes that the playwright had given the two actors a worthier conflict. In the last scene—yet another cocktail-party sequence, in which Colin and Mike try to score points off each other—we're struck by how petty the play really is. Neither of these two characters really exists except to endorse and justify Mr. Williamson's own brilliant career. —MIMI KRAMER



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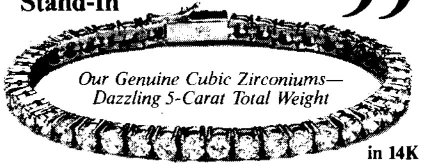

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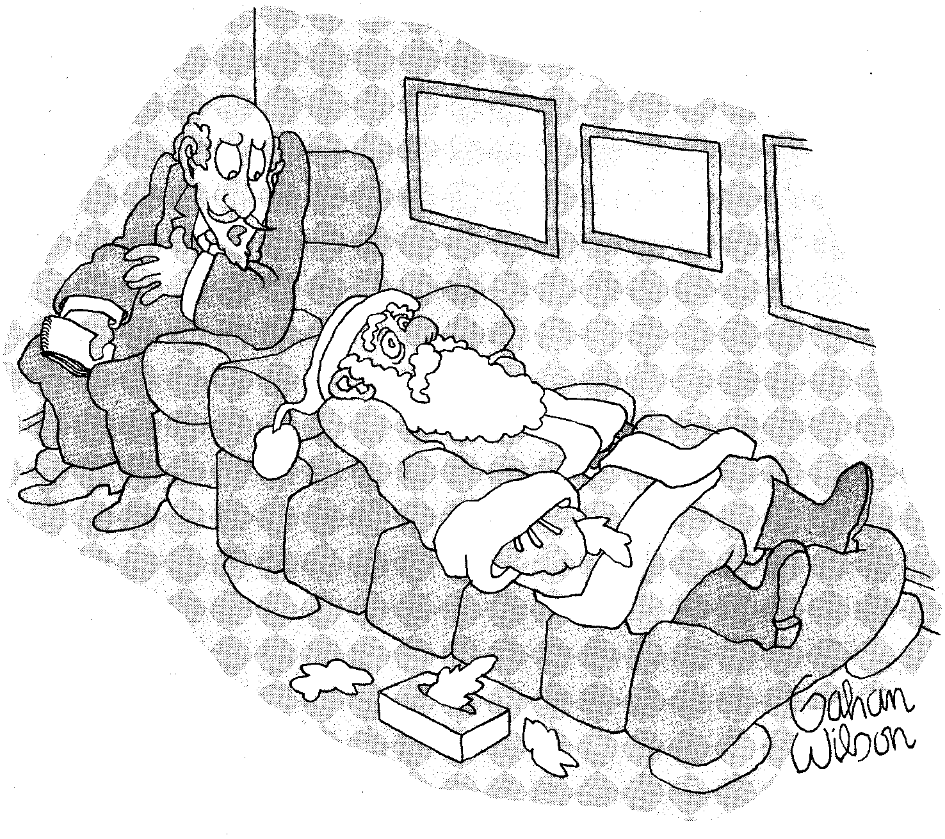
WHILE VISIONS OF SUGARPLUMS DANCED IN THEIR HEADS

A FEW years back, the columnist Ellen Goodman reported sadly that a three-year-old girl of her acquaintance, whom she had looked forward to teaching how to tie her shoes, did not need her for that purpose: "The role that I had honed over years of teaching—left over right, under and pull—has . . . become extinct, done in by Velcro." Moreover, "My young friend does not need me to teach her to tell time either," she wrote. "The big hands and little hands . . . are being replaced inexorably with digits. . . . Technology changes so quickly that we hardly have a chance to teach our children what we know before it becomes irrelevant." She pined for the good old days when there was continuity, when "crafts were handed down from one generation to another." Sometimes life has its happy surprises. A helpful older generation still has some relevance after all—here and there, anyhow. Velcro is a great convenience, but for the shoes that children mostly favor in this age of the high-style sneaker advice about left over right, under and pull would be just the ticket. It may be, of course, that the children on your list want to practice certain still useful skills when their relevant helpers aren't around. In that case, the Toy Park stores—there's one at 112 East 86th Street and another at 626 Columbus Avenue (91st)—have, for $17.99 apiece, a pair of soft-bodied, yarn-haired fourteen-inch dolls (Dapper Dan is the boy doll, Dressy Bessy is the girl) whose clothing encourages their owners not only to tie a shoe but to buckle a buckle, button a button, snap a snap, and zip a zipper. Digital dominance of the timepiece world has also proved to be less inexorable than was advertised. This year's F. A. O. Schwarz catalogue includes eleven clocks and watches for children, and not a digital in the lot. A bright-red alarm clock that says on its face "It's Howdy Doody Time" is $25. Or, this being Mickey Mouse's diamond jubilee, a Mickey Mouse watch—also the big-hand, little-hand kind—would be especially appropriate. You'll find it for $19.95 at Woolworth's, the former five-and-dime. Of course, little kids aren't the only age group that appreciates Mickey. A man-size—or big-kid-size—Seiko Mickey Mouse watch that identifies him as "The Goodwill Ambassador of the World" is $175 at Macy's.



"Listen, everybody feels a little depressed around this time of year!"

Last month, the Walt Disney Company celebrated with a cast of thousands the sixtieth anniversary of the opening of "Steamboat Willie," which took place at the Colony Theatre here, on Broadway, on November 18, 1928. "Steamboat Willie" was not only the first Mickey Mouse animated cartoon but the first cartoon in which the animation and the sound were synchronized. The big anniversary bash was held at Disney World, in Orlando, Florida, rather than in Hollywood, where the animation was done, or here, where the show opened, and also where the sound was recorded. In those days, New York was the place where an out-of-towner came looking for the smart musicians who could cope with the brand-new phenomenon of sound-recording. During the two-week trial run at the Colony, the seven-minute cartoon was a smash, and Mickey Mouse—along with, of course, Disney—was on his way. Two days before the big party in Orlando, some of the original drawings for "Steamboat Willie" and a print of the cartoon were installed among the entertainment memorabilia in the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian, along with Fonzie's jacket and Archie Bunker's chair. Roger G. Kennedy, the museum's director, wore a big smile and a Mickey Mouse T-shirt for the occasion. "I'd almost do anything for Mickey Mouse," he said, noting that Mickey "reflects our society." (This is not a unanimous view. James Michener, not generally thought of as a subversive sort, once described Mickey as "one of the most disastrous cultural influences ever to hit America," adding, "I suppose the damage done to the American psyche by this foolish mouse will not be specified for another fifty years." Without waiting that long, Michener laid part of the blame for Vietnam on what

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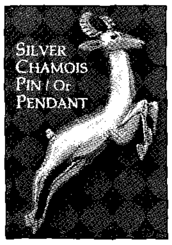

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he called "that idiot optimist." Never mind. Just break out those T-shirts. After all, it's Mickey's birthday.) Maybe there are people on your list who would be all smiles, too, if you provided them with Mickey Mouse memorabilia of their own. There's a special place to go for them: Mickey & Me, at 152 Eighth Avenue (18th), which specializes in items featuring Mickey and his friends. There you'll find, for instance, a Mickey Mouse calculator showing Mickey decked out in a mortarboard; $15.49 for this. At the same place, there's a plush figure wearing a polka-dot pinafore and a satin hair bow. It's Minnie Mouse, and she comes in three sizes, for $5, $13, and $24. She was in "Steamboat Willie," so it's her diamond jubilee, too. The Penny Whistle stores (there are four of them in Manhattan and Brooklyn) have a ride-on rocking Mickey Mouse. Made of brightly painted wood, it's just under three feet long and twenty-one inches high, and costs $180.

LOCAL sorts who thought it would have been more fitting if the big celebration of the November 18, 1928, opening had been held where the event took place may have been somewhat mollified by the interesting change of venue in the case of "Oliver & Company," the new Disney full-length animated feature film that opened all over the country, also on November 18th. Although it's based—very loosely indeed—on Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist," whose setting was, of course, the streets of nineteenth-century London, the locale for the animated Oliver is this city, and the time is now, so it's complete with races through subway tunnels, scoots on and off a barge in the East River, and trips to Delancey Street and to Fifth Avenue. It's hard to say how Dickens would have reacted to this geographic transfer. When he visited America in 1842, he had a generally low opinion of New York, complaining that there were far too many pigs—real pigs, that is—rooting up and down Broadway. As in the novel, Oliver is a homeless orphan who falls in with lowlife types. In this version, though, most of the principals are stray dogs, one of the exceptions being Oliver, who is an orange kitten. The voice of the Artful Dodger, a street-smart terrier who wears black shades, is supplied by Billy Joel (again in a New

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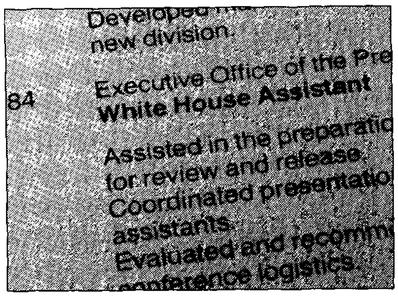
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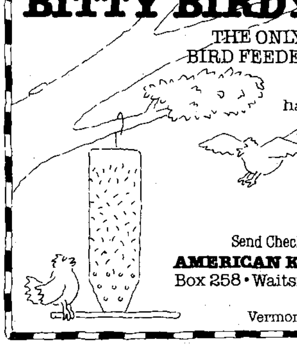

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York state of mind). Bette Midler, as the voice of Georgette, a sassy Park Avenue poodle, belts out a fine song entitled "Perfect Isn't Easy." The soundtrack cassette for "Oliver & Company" (Disney 6401N) is $9.98. (Like all children's cassettes and books mentioned in this report, it can be found almost anywhere such items are sold.) Of course, through licensing, small plush figures representing the stars of the new animated feature are available. Plush versions of Oliver, Georgette, the Artful Dodger, and other characters, from seven to ten inches high, are $15 at the Sears stores. And, considering the long association between the toy and the food industries (which we'll go into later), it's no surprise that two-inch plastic figures of four of the characters are handed out to anybody who buys a book of gift certificates at McDonald's.

Licensing, as you surely know, is what keeps much of the world of modern commerce and entertainment romping along. Michael J. Fox, who has been a long-running smash hit in the television sitcom "Family Ties," almost didn't get the part, because NBC President Brandon Tartikoff opposed him, saying, "I don't think we are talking about somebody who will be on the side of a lunchbox a year from now." Deals that put the faces of real or fictional characters on lunchboxes, toothbrush holders, board games, calculators, sneakers, and so on, are the heart of the licensing process. Fox was finally given the "Family Ties" role anyhow, and eventually he made it onto the side of children's lunchboxes. (He sent one to Tartikoff.) If you are dubious about the philosophy said to be prevalent in some commercial circles—"I'm licensed, therefore I am"—consider the case of "Kate & Allie." The adult television comedy, about two women and their children coping with life after divorce, flourished for several years in the 8 P.M. Monday spot. In 1986, it was challenged in that time slot by a program called "Alf," about an ugly, smart-cracking alien of that name who moves in with a human family. Paul Schulman, a well-known buyer of television time, predicted that "Alf" would wipe up the airwaves with "Kate & Allie," which doesn't go in for licensing. Aware that an Alf doll would soon be on the market, he demanded of doubters, "When was the last time you were at an airport and saw somebody with a 'Kate & Allie' doll?" Sure enough, "Alf" continues to prosper in the eight-o'clock time slot, while "Kate & Allie" has been in hiatus all this season. It is now being brought back but at a different hour. Alf the doll, by the way, is not so bad. Nobody would call him a comely sort. He has scraggly brown fur all over his body, a large snout, and small, beady eyes. Still, his looks seem to amuse the kids, and he's huggable; twenty inches tall, he's $19.91 at Kiddie City, 35 West 34th Street. Before you spend a lot of time deploring the uses of the licensing process, take note that two-thirds of the money for producing "Sesame Street" comes from the licensing of products that feature the names of Big Bird, the Cookie Monster, Oscar the Grouch, and that crowd, and that without this arrangement children would probably not have a chance to keep track of events at that famous address—which is beginning its twentieth year at the old stand. This would cause not only Oscar but many, many children to turn very grouchy.

THE same day that Mickey Mouse celebrated his sixtieth and "Oliver & Company" opened, another animated movie arrived at the theatres: "The Land Before Time." Its opening on November 18th had nothing to do with anything the Disney people were up to that day. Two years earlier, the movie's major producer, Steven Spielberg, and its director, Don Bluth—the latter a defector from Disney—had launched their first collaborative effort, the animated feature "An American Tail," on the Friday before Thanksgiving. Their hope was that by following this precedent in 1988 "The Land Before Time" would bring them the same kind of luck. "An American Tail" brought in seventy-five million dollars at the box office—the most of any animated feature in history—and forty-eight million more in videocassette sales. That movie is about the adventures of a mouse, Fievel Mousekewitz, who, having lost his immigrant family in a mishap at Ellis Island, wanders about the turn-of-the-century streets of New York, homeless and often hungry. The subtitle of the new Spielberg-Bluth collaboration is "An Adventure in the Land of the Dinosaur." In doing this movie, Spielberg and company associated themselves with a phenomenon—the excitement over dinosaurs—that has been a source of puzzlement, and even consternation, in some areas of the toy industry. A few children—mostly little boys between four and eight or so—have always been interested in dinosaurs. So have some of their elders. Indeed, in the opening paragraph of "Bleak House" you'll find Dickens imagining what the streets of London would be like if a megalosaurus were prowling about them. This appeared only eight years after Sir Richard Owen gave the prehistoric beasts a general name: "dinosaur" means "terrible lizard" in Greek. In the last several years, dinosaurs have become such a passion with some children that those who can barely pronounce the names of their best friends can recite the names of all the major dinosaurs and their attributes. There are several theories about why children began to feel strongly about dinosaurs. One is that, in an age when they hear grown-ups talk of a nuclear holocaust and the greenhouse effect, events over which they would have no control, it is a comfort to be in charge of a gigantic animal—that is, the representation of a former gigantic animal—that they *can* control. Why children should choose as a play pal a beast who is as extinct as they and the rest of us could all become is another question. What caused major wonderment in the toy business is that this passion and the consequent demand for dinosaur items under the Christmas tree came about with no pushing from high-powered public-relations folks, no savvy buyers of television time, and no licensing experts. The beasts from the Mesozoic era, sixty-five million years ago, somehow managed to eliminate today's middlemen. Of course, the industry soon responded to this alarming development, and hundreds of commercial items cashing in on dinosaurmania now flourish in the marketplace. A board game called Dizzy Dizzy Dinosaurs, for example, is $12.99 at Toys R Us. You'll find at Schwarz—which last Christmas gave over the enclave just to the right as you come in the store entirely to dinosaur merchandise—a set of wooden put-together dinosaur puzzles at $20 a dinosaur. Childcraft at one point had two fine stores in Manhattan, but now you can deal with them only at their catalogue address: 20 Kilmer Road, Edison, New Jersey 08818; telephone: 800 631-5657. (There's a lot of that kind of thing going on.) The catalogue lists an abundance of dinosaur items, such as your-favorite-dinosaur sweatshirts ($14.75) and baseball caps ($6.95), backpacks ($10.95 and $14.95), and eight glow-in-the-dark dinosaurs, from three and a half to five inches long. The set of eight goes for $3.95.

In the new movie "The Land Before Time," a baby dinosaur named Littlefoot—a brontosaurus—who is orphaned early in the film, embarks on a perilous journey to a place called the Great Valley, in search of food. Along the way, he is joined by several other dinosaur orphans. There is no other human category that we know of whose members seem to find the nuclear family so uncompelling a subject as the devisers of amusements for children. The appeal of orphan types is not a new phenomenon. If you have some young friend who's really into waifs, a thirteen-inch version of Cosette, the sad-faced little girl in "Les Misérables," is available for $54 at B. Shackman, 85 Fifth Avenue (16th). Made of vinyl, she has long dark hair and wears a beret and, as a dress, an array of tastefully arranged rags. (Next year, perhaps, a pricey, tattered version of the Little Match Girl.) Plush figures of the "Land Before Time" dinosaur orphans—not only Littlefoot but a triceratops, a pterodactyl, and so on, each with its individual personality—are about nine inches tall and cost $18 at the J. C. Penney stores: another exclusive arrangement. This movie's fast-food alliance is with Pizza Hut, whose customers will be able to buy four-inch plastic figures of the dinosaurs for $1.99 apiece. Much of Christmas is about generations—that is, older members of families (or older friends) who want to find for children on their lists the kind of toys that made them happy when they were the same age. Some toy-industry leaders have apparently concluded that a significant number of the figures prowling the toy aisles this year, with money jingling in their pockets, will be people born in the first decade and a half after the Second World War—members of a crowd who may recall exactly where they

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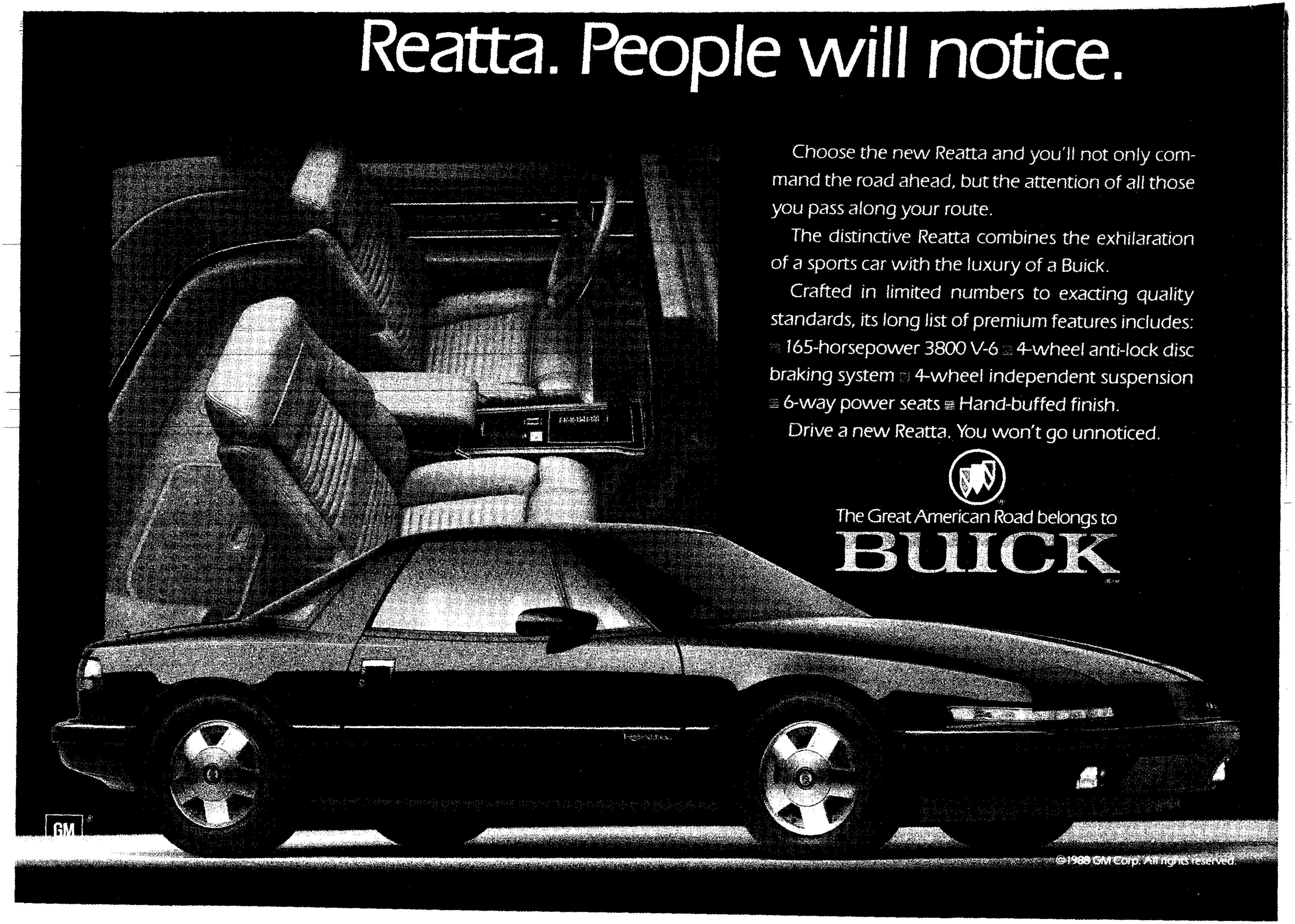
were when they first heard the phrase "aging baby boomers." The Schwarz enclave to the right of the door this Christmas is given over to Howdy Doody items. (That's where we found the Howdy Doody alarm clock.) You can have your choice of more than thirty different licensed items honoring the puppet who used to charm little kids by saying things like "Woweeboy!" between 1947 and 1960. There's a Howdy Doody ventriloquist doll for $40 and a hand puppet for $30. In further deference to this age group, on November 20th NBC ran a Disney film called "Davy Crockett: Rainbow in the Thunder," which is said to be the first of a series. Davy Crockett comic books are now available at some neighborhood candy stores, and negotiations are under way to have various Davy Crockett items, including a coonskin cap, on the market before you can say "King of the Wild Frontier."

IN the matter of the current preoccupation with waifs, Russell Baker has had some thoughts about the Frank Capra film "It's a Wonderful Life," whose message is that money doesn't matter if you have friends. It was not particularly successful when it first came out, in 1946, he said, because people didn't fall for that kind of hokum then: they could remember the Depression. Nowadays, in what he called "one of greed's great ages," you can hardly escape the film on December television. Baker's message was "Maybe you have to be filthy rich before you can enjoy the happiness that poverty affords others." We should say, perhaps, that the *Times* reported last year that "The Twelve Days of Christmas" wasn't being played as often as it used to be. Pointing out that it was the first Christmas after the stock-market crash, the *Times* suggested that perhaps greed was becoming passé. Baker offers another cavil about "It's a Wonderful Life"—and if you disagree with him on this one and think the kids might want to watch it a few more times, the videocassette is $19.95. His cavil concerns snow: Capra, he says, dumped "the Hollywood equivalent of a Russian winter" on the Christmas Eve scenes, an excess for which he blames the insistence of California types on romanticizing Christmas snow, which they have had no experience with. They did the same thing, he complains, in Hollywood-made Dickens movies. The fact is, he maintains, it hardly ever snows in London in December, but Dickens, too, liked to pretend that it did, and started the myth about snow-covered English Christmas landscapes. Fortunately (some would say), Macy's goes along with Dickens on this one. To put under the tree, or perhaps on the Christmas table, it has eight or ten small lighted ceramic buildings, most of them about seven inches wide, that together form a highly romanticized version of what it calls a Dickens Village. There's the Thomas Kersey Coffee-House, for $28; the Old Curiosity Shop, for $32; and Tuttle's Pub, for $28. And there are assorted coaches, carollers, street lamps, and so on—and a packet of snow, which is $3.

OF course, among those whose names are on your list there will be some who do not hold a cavilling view of snow—beginning with the ones who ask for a sled. One of the reasons that buyers of children's gifts, as they move about the toy departments, often look so nervous is that they live in an age when everything that happens to a child is known to have its consequences, and if they buy a kid something that they think is exactly what he wants it may turn out to be not exactly what he wants, and he will remember that forever. One Christmas, back in the Depression years, in upstate New York, a boy named Michael Kernan asked for a sled. Over half a century later, in the Washington *Post*, he wrote about how it came out. "I got my sled, but it was not a Flexible Flyer. I showed no disappointment. . . . The extra-long Flexible Flyer with its big red and gold logo of a hunched eagle and the name in large black script had an authority all its own. It was a serious sled." He forgave his parents, he wrote, because, being ancient sorts, what did they know: "Parents are a separate race from us." If you want to avoid this severe judgment, Childcraft has a five-foot Flexible Flyer for $69.95. It has a hunched eagle and large black script, and is surely a serious sled. No one needs to be reminded that sleds are important. Six years ago, Steven Spielberg paid $60,500 for what was offered as the last remaining available sled of three Rosebuds that were made for Orson Welles' "Citizen Kane."

WITH all those electronic sleigh bells jingle-jangling around the clock, some people do get a bit out of sorts during this joyful season. Erma Bombeck insists that Ebenezer Scrooge is a closet folk hero to people who are captive audiences for too much seasonal music, and claims that some of them meet secretly on Christmas Eve to smash Perry Como recordings of "Ave Maria." ("It helps.") Dr. Seuss has said that, among the characters he has written about, the one he identifies with most strongly is the central figure in "How the Grinch Stole Christmas!" (The Barnes & Noble stores have this for $6.95.) The Grinch, a dedicated Christmas-hater, snatches away all the presents, and even the Christmas trees, in the mythical town of Whoville. The story has a happy ending (some would say), since the Whoville residents celebrate the day anyhow, their philosophy being that presents don't matter if you have the Christmas spirit—an approach that you may not feel you can get away with recommending to the young friends on your list. The members of the City Council of Sebastopol, California, doubtless thought of themselves not as grinches but as simple enforcers of local ordinances when, during this season a couple of years ago, they ordered the removal of a Christmas tree of sorts: a tall papier-mâché figure of Olive Oyl, hung with blinking Christmas lights, that decorated the roof of Popeye's Hair Care salon there. Dozens of residents held black candles and the Analy High School Jazz Band played a mournful dirge while Olive's lights were undone and she was lowered to the sidewalk. Before Olive was carried in procession down Main Street, with police directing the traffic, and then driven to a



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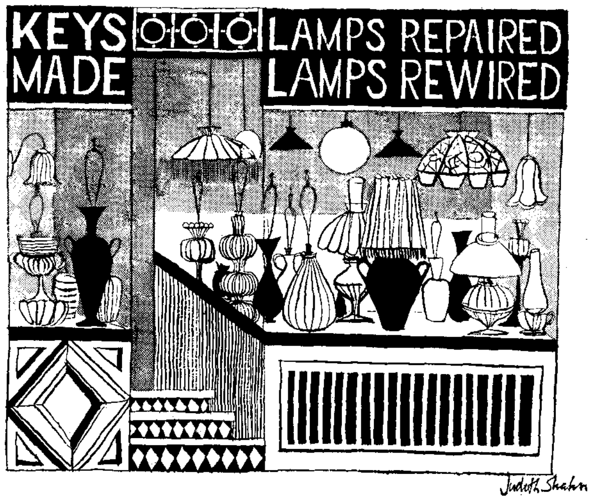
garage, the statue's creator, an artist named Green Greenwait, stood on the rooftop wearing Angel of Death wings and offered a short tribute, saying, "She became Queen of Sebastopol, and she brought a smile to her many subjects . . . and frowns to those who wanted and deserved them." It is wise not to forget the high regard in which many people hold the characters that, as children, they got to know in the comic strips and also, perhaps, at the movies and in the toy departments. Olive Oyl's subjects in Sebastopol might be pleased to know that a twenty-inch cloth-and-plastic figure of their old friend is available for $28 at Macy's. At the same place and at the same price, you'll find Popeye in his sailor suit, his pipe at its usual jaunty angle. So far, he obviously hasn't given up smoking, as Mr. Potato Head did last year, breaking a thirty-five-year-old habit and causing him to be designated the "spokesspud" of the annual Great American Smokeout. The pipeless Mr. Potato Head, looking, in fact, very fit—he has all his other familiar appurtenances, including a cane, spectacles, and a suitcase—is $6.99 at the Toy Park. With Olive Oyl and Popeye at Macy's you'll also find, for $28, the nineteen-inch figure of Wimpy, who clearly hasn't given up his favorite indulgence: there's a half-eaten plastic hamburger in his hand. Or, if anybody would like to see Olive and her friends in action, the videocassette of Robert Altman's movie "Popeye" is $22.95.

WE'RE sorry to report that last month something worse than being unceremoniously removed from the roof of a beauty salon happened to Olive Oyl. As you know, each year, in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, there are a dozen or so giant balloons representing figures dear to children's hearts, such as Superman, Snoopy, and Mickey Mouse. In 1982, one of them was Olive Oyl—an event that was hailed as the first time in the parade's fifty-six years that children along the parade route had been able to marvel at a large female balloon. "A GIANT STRIDE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS" was the next morning's headline in the Washington *Post*. No one seemed to have an explanation of why it had taken so long. Tall and proud, Olive Oyl crossed the finish line to huge cheers from her smiling subjects. However, a police officer on the sidelines was quoted as saying, "Olive Oyl shouldn't be here. She should be cooking the turkey. What's Popeye going to eat for dinner?" It was assumed that he was only kidding. In the years that followed, two more giant female balloons were added to the parade: Betty Boop and Miss Piggy. This year, Pink Panther was a new giant balloon, and Big Bird flew for the first time. Olive Oyl, Betty Boop, and Miss Piggy had not been invited: once again, the children looked at an all-male lineup. Whatever the parade was, you couldn't call it a giant stride for women's rights. That same week, the Lionel company ran an advertisement for its trains. About a decade ago, a Lionel ad at Christmastime had shown a picture of a mother holding a train box; the text explained that she had always wanted an electric train when she was a child, and now she wanted to make sure that her daughter got one. The Lionel ad that ran in local papers last month showed a father and son playing with a train. It was headed "TOGETHER, YOU'LL BUILD MORE THAN A RAILROAD." Below, the text said, "Together, you'll set up the trestles. . . . You'll spend hours that seem like mere moments. You and your son, together. . . . When he opens the package, he'll discover a whole new world. . . . And it's the perfect way to teach him one of life's most important things: How to dream." Some of the girls in the family may conclude that it's time to get out that button that says "I Haven't Come All That Far—and Don't Call Me Baby." A Lionel train called the Cannonball Express is $129.95 at the Train Shop, 23 West 45th Street—and have a great time, fellas.

THE alliance between the toy business and the food industry, which we mentioned, goes back a long way. Some think it may have started in 1912, when the Cracker Jack people began putting small toys in their boxes as prizes. By the early nineteen-sixties, representatives of the two industries were seeing a lot of each other, since they shared most of the sponsorship of children's Saturday-morning cartoon shows. Eventually, some cereal companies joined corporate forces with them. Nabisco, for example, bought a company called Aurora. Quaker Oats bought Fisher-Price, best known for its preschool toys. The chubby-faced Quaker on the Quaker Oats box had previously had quite a dour expression. After the company went into the toy business, he began wearing a big smile. Pillsbury never bought a toy company, but it began bringing out its own toys. Small plastic figures of the mascot in their ads, the Pillsbury Doughboy, known as Poppin' Fresh, were made available to toy departments. Later, he was provided with a female friend, Poppie Fresh. General Mills bought up so many toy companies—including those that put out Monopoly, the "Star Wars" figures, Lionel trains, and so on—that for a time it was the largest toy company in the world. In the end, however, most of the toy-and-food alliances didn't work out. Nabisco had been a company proudly associated with such wholesome items as Shredded Wheat and Oreo cookies. (This was long before it linked up with the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, and long, *long* before it became part of a twenty-four-and-a-half-billion-dollar buyout, which one headline writer memorialized as "THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLED.") Soon after Nabisco bought Aurora, it discovered that the toy company's products included snap-together torture kits, such as a Hanging Cage, whose spikes were tipped with simulated blood, and a toy guillotine. It found its headquarters here being picketed by delegations of mothers waving signs that blamed its products for a rise in juvenile crime. ("Sadistic Toys Make Violent Boys!") As for Pills-



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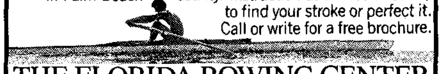

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bury, it had to sue a porn magazine that had made unwholesome suggestions as to the possible nature of the relationship between Poppin' and Poppie. General Mills found the toy business to be unstable and unpredictable. Eventually, all but one of these companies ended the toy phase of their corporate lives. The exception was Quaker Oats. The old Quaker's smile is brighter than ever now that the company makes more money from its Fisher-Price toys than from its highly-touted-as-nutritious cereals. All in all, it's probably appropriate that on the most recent toy best-seller list—a monthly accounting put out by the trade publication *Toy & Hobby World*, which is known to some in the industry as "the charts"—the two Fisher-Price best-sellers are the company's Fun with Food series and the Fisher-Price Fun with Food Kitchen. The kitchen, so called, is a roll-around heavy-plastic arrangement that has on one side a pretend sink and on the other a pretend oven with a pretend freezer beneath it. It's about twenty-one inches wide and twenty-one inches deep and two and a half feet high. There are various attached accessories, such as a pretend toaster, a pretend clock, and a real blackboard, on which someone can write non-pretend messages. Toy Park has this for $97.99. At the same place, for $8.99 each, there are a variety of Fun with Food items that are even higher on the best-seller list. (Maybe this isn't the era of the hungry waif after all.) There is what is called Homemade Pizza which includes highly unnutritious pizza dough (it's plastic), along with non-edible sauce, cheese, and pepperoni, and there's a plastic TV dinner.

RELATIVES and friends who have any recollection of what toys were on the lists some children handed them last year and for some years before that—the toys the kids simply had to have—may find that such items are no longer essential ones. No one seems to know why, but monsters are no longer in great demand. (Two years ago, the enclave near the Schwarz entrance was given over to monsters called Inhumanoids. They're not made at all now.) Robots are also pretty much out of style. So are the little boys' plastic action figures (that is, dolls) known as superheroes—He-Man, the Master of the Universe, and so on—who fought on the side of good and sometimes evil in mythical kingdoms, or perhaps in outer space. Even contemporary hero types such as Rambo aren't doing well (some may be happy to learn). You may remember that a California toymaker lost a lot of money last year trying to market the action figure of a Presidentially designated real American hero, Oliver North. The entrepreneur dealt with this disaster by announcing that he would twist off Oliver's head and strip him of his uniform. (Toymakers can be ruthless sorts.) He would then dress the action figure in "an Italian suit" and attach to it the head of Mikhail Gorbachev, birthmark and all. He envisioned this as the start of a "world-leader collection," which would include Ronald Reagan, and would give children a chance, he said, "to play with world leaders" instead of Rambo. "We feel it will be a transcendental experience," he said. Transcendental, like quite a few other toy ideas, didn't sell this year. Also generally absent from the scene—and perhaps from the list you have in your hand—are the talkers: the very expensive, heavy-with-batteries talking animals and dolls that were high on the charts last year. A parent of our acquaintance once complained of having nightmares in which some night she would find the children's room full of dolls all chattering away at once and saying very unseemly things to each other. A similarly afflicted parent may have thought up the plot to the new movie "Child's Play." ("You'll wish it was only make-believe.") If you remember, that's the movie about a large talking boy doll named Chucky who is possessed by the mind and soul of a mass murderer and, before he is disposed of, commits a number of gruesome crimes. If you want to take a chance on a boy doll, a non-talker, we know of a very nice one. He's twenty inches tall, his name is My Buddy, and he's $19.99 at Kiddie City.

THEY may not be playing that greedy song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" as often, but there are plenty of games around in which children try to rake it in in the worlds of business and finance. A new one, Wall Street Raiders, is $31.98 at Game Show, 474 Sixth Avenue (12th). It boasts that its educational value includes getting to know all about "hot tips, greenmail, poison pills, and golden parachutes." It can be played by anywhere from three to eight people, ages twelve and up. One wrinkle of Wall Street Raiders is that—as is not the case with Monopoly—"even a bankrupt player can rebound to be a winner." This concession could be good news to some of the big toy companies that have lately fallen on hard times. We can't say we've ever run into a game called Chapter 11, but it would have educational value for, among other companies, Worlds of Wonder. Despite its jazzy acronym, it's in the bankruptcy courts, and that's why you'll have a hard time finding WOW's Lazer Tags (pretend lasers with which children were encouraged to shoot their friends) or a talking bear called Teddy Ruxpin, two WOW products that were the toy-department smashes of the 1986 and 1985 Christmas seasons, respectively. The company whose history offers the most irresistible material for some future ankruptcy game is Coleco. You may emember how the plot went: At one ime, Coleco made the Adam comuter, and when that went down the ubes the company was saved by a doll, he Cabbage Patch Kid. Memories of he Kids, those sixteen-inch softodied baby dolls with pursed lips, lightly crossed eyes, and a sixty-toeventy-dollar price tag, still glitter in he minds of toy-industry leaders. Often quoted is a report of the *Wall Street ournal* in the Christmas, 1983, season hat, because of the clamor for the Kids, the nation's toy departments reembled "the streets of Beirut." The olls are still available here and there, ut now the aisles around them are a arvel of orderliness. The devisers of hat future Chapter 11 game may find hard to explain to the children playg it how a company that sold a billion nd a half dollars' worth of the dolls (a undred million as recently as in 1987) ould end up in bankruptcy court, but hat's where Coleco now is. If someone appens to hand you a list with the abbage Patch Kids on it, Kiddie City as them for $19.99. An article in *oy & Hobby World* this fall suggested at twenty-five years from now the id-nineteen-eighties might be reembered as the era when a generaon of children, their parents, Wall treet, and an entire industry totally st their composure over a terribly gly doll.

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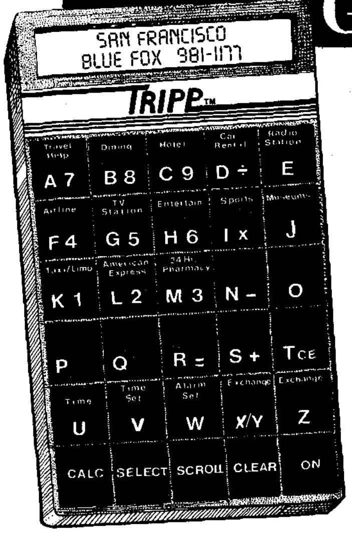

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available is Etch A Sketch, which has been around since 1960. It's that framed glass screen on which children can draw figures and landscapes and designs by turning knobs. Alison Lurie, in her latest novel, "The Truth About Lorin Jones," writes of her heroine's receiving such a toy in the mail from her father—"the same damn Etch A Sketch she had longed for when she was eight years old, that her father had so often promised and never brought her." The unexpected gift has a benign effect on the plot. We can't guarantee similar results, but Etch A Sketch is $15 at Schwarz. Slinky toys, which have been on the market since 1945, have played small roles (very small) on the sets of "St. Elsewhere" and "L.A. Law," but their major role in children's lives has been that they're a lot of fun. The Penny Whistle stores have them for $2.50, and there's a new, smaller size for a dollar less. Silly Putty, which came along in 1950, is $2 at the same place. Both Slinky and Silly Putty still sell at the rate of two million a year. Lego blocks first came out in Denmark in 1949 and went on the market here in 1961. (The word "Lego" is derived from *leg godt*, which means "play well" in Danish.) About a billion and a half of the sets have been sold in this country. If you want to add to these numbers, Alphabet Alley, 51 Avenue A (4th), has an array of Lego sets; a basic set of three hundred and nine pieces, for five-to-seven-year-olds, goes for $20. The store's location may sound out of the way, so you might like to know that it has wide aisles, to accommodate strollers, and there is a table at the back where children are encouraged to play with an elaborate wooden Brio train. A Brio set sells there for $56. Another old reliable item would be marbles. Game Show has "The Klutz Book of Marbles," which comes with eighteen marbles, a shooter, and a drawstring bag, for $6.95. Children have been playing with marbles since the Stone Age, according to archeologists, who have come across carefully rounded stones at many digs. A long while later, in "The Pickwick Papers," Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz proved that a child was dejected by pointing out, "His infant sports are disregarded . . . his 'alley tors' and his 'commoneys' are alike neglected; he forgets the long familiar cry of 'knuckle down.' " Marbles were an ideal Depression toy, as Paul Dickson noted this year in the Washington *Post* in a study of the marble situation, and although they continued to sell well in the early baby-boomer years, things are slower now. Stanley Block, the founder of the Marble Collectors Society of America, explained not long ago, "It was something kids did together on their way home from school. Most kids don't walk to school anymore." However, an annual National Marbles Tournament is still held—for both boys and girls—in Wildwood, New Jersey, and the sponsors of the tournament also sponsor a new game called Marble Mania. It can be had by sending a check for $42.95 to Marble Mania, P.O. Box 7731, Des Moines, Iowa 50322. The reason it costs this much is that it includes not only two sets of marbles, shooters, and cues but a videotape on how to play the game, and a heavy woven four-foot-by-four-foot mat to play on. It may be that the cry of "knuckle down" will again be heard on the block.

THE harried expressions on the faces of many shoppers on the lookout this season for old familiar toys suggest that perhaps the items on the lists that children have handed them are the very latest. The top toy seller just now is not related to marbles; it is the video-game system Nintendo. In late 1983, the video-game industry, which for several years had been the purveyor of the hottest thing around, suddenly collapsed, causing some toy and game companies to fall on very hard times indeed. Now Nintendo, at least, is prospering mightily; ten million of the games have been sold in the United States alone. Nintendo, which accounts for more than eighty per cen of the entire video-game market, i made by a Japanese company. (There' an old familiar for you.) The gam costs about a hundred dollars, an game cartridges average thirty-fiv dollars apiece. "For boys in this country between the ages of eight and fifteen, not having a Nintendo is like no having a baseball bat," Rick Anguilla the *Toy & Hobby World* editor, tol the *Times* this month.

Both boys and girls are encourage to play what the Milton Bradley company calls its "glamorous new famil board game," Hotels ($19.95 at Kiddi City), in which the players (eight year old and up) develop international resort properties, or, as it advises on th

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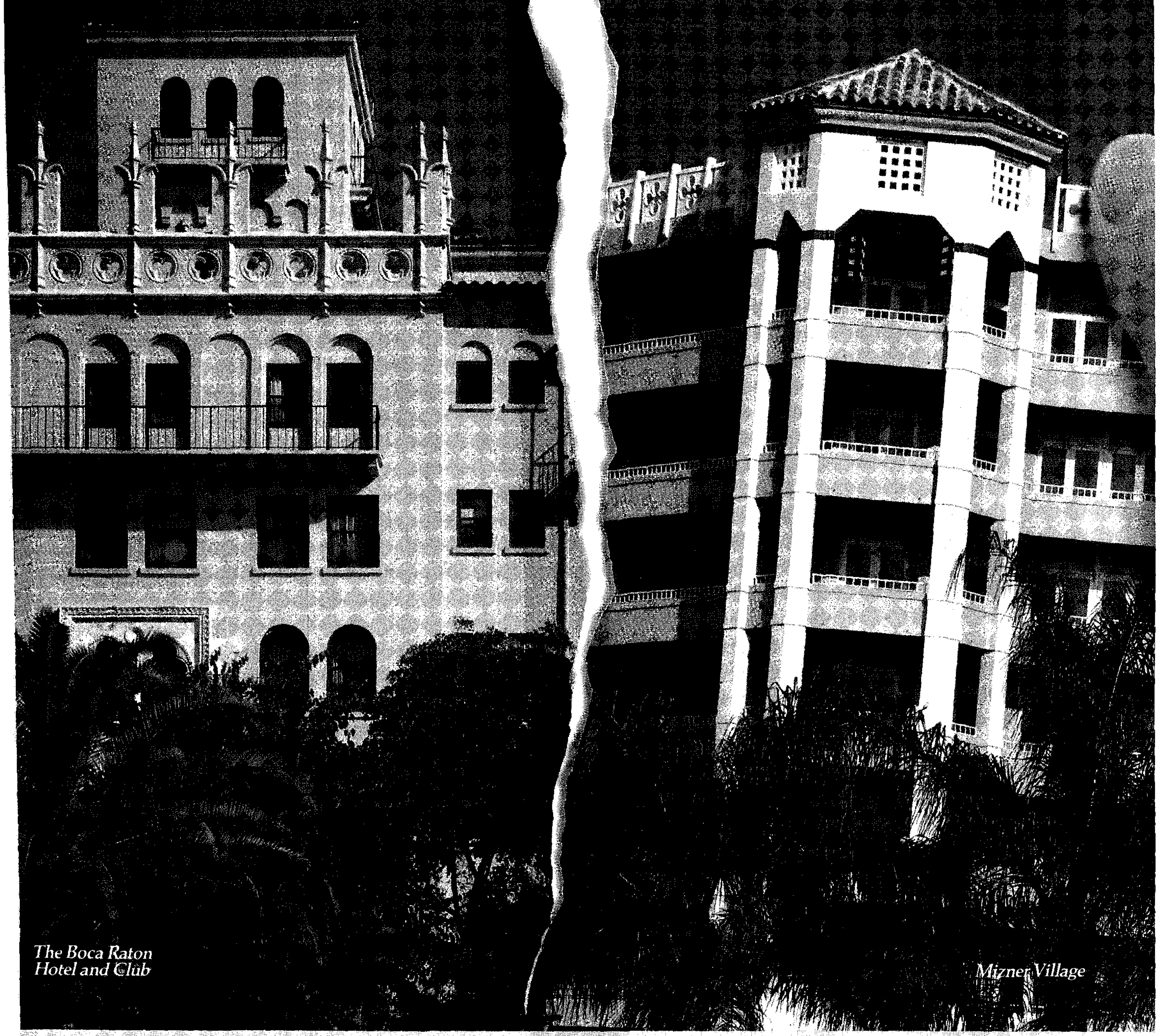

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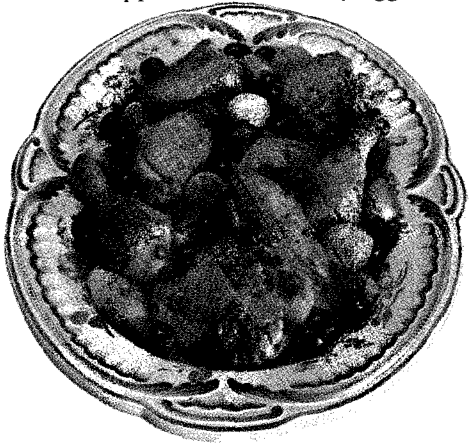

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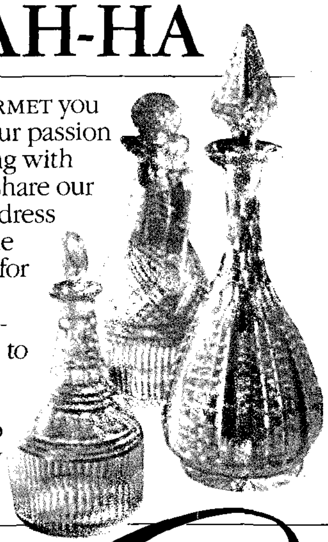

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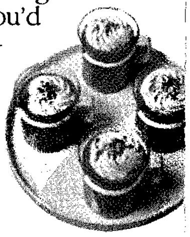

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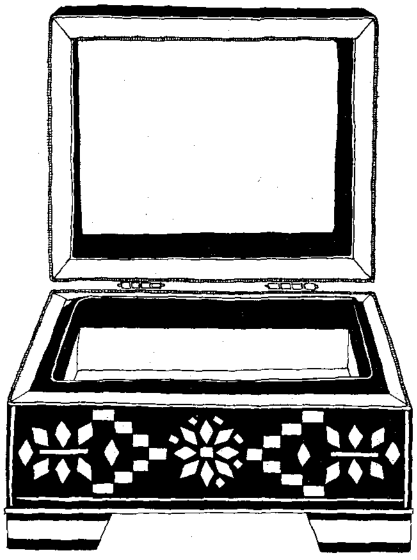
box, "Buy Land! Build a Resort! Wheel and Deal! Own It All!" It would have been nice if we could have found a Donald Trump doll to go with this: maybe next year. Milton Bradley, who founded the company, is also given credit for founding the whole board-game business when, in 1860, he invented the Checkered Game of Life. In that game, players tried to make it to the promised land of a Happy Old Age by avoiding squares marked "Idleness," "Intemperance," "Gambling," and "Crime," which would lead them to "Disgrace," "Poverty," "Ruin," and "Prison." A currently popular Bradley game is A Question of Scruples, in which the questions asked often involve adultery and the like. This year, the company has brought out A Question of Scruples for Kids. The questions here run like this: "You have just had a fight with your sister. At supper, you see a small green caterpillar in her salad. Do you tell her?" These games are $19.95 and $12.95 at Barnes & Noble. Many shoppers will be pleased to know there are currently popular games that resemble the old parlor charades. The best-selling board game in the country is Pictionary, now called Pictionary First Edition. Instead of acting out a word for their teammates, players try to draw a picture of it within a prescribed time limit. There's now also Pictionary Junior, with easier words, and Pictionary Junior: Play It with Clay, in which smaller children make a sculpture (not clay but Plasticine is provided) to help their teammates igure out a word. Pictionary First Edition and Pictionary Junior: Play It with Clay are $19.99 at Kiddie City, and Pictionary Junior is $14.95 at Barnes & Noble.

For children not old enough even or a charades, junior, Alphabet Alley has a four-inch-high Battat Musical Bird, a chubby plastic fellow who omes in several bright colors, hangs by a string on the crib rail, or wher-ver, and flaps its wings and rolls its yes as it plays Brahms' "Lullaby;" 9.50 for this. At Schwarz, there's an xceptionally nice top called a Spinning Bee, for $22. Press down, flowers bob round, a bell rings, and flower etals open to reveal a sassy-looking ueen bee; then they close up. For lightly older types (from two to six), a ombination xylophone and child-style piano, for $30, at the same place, has color-coördinated keys to play one or the other (and xylophone sticks, of course) and color-coördinated sheet music provided for six songs, such as "London Bridge Is Falling Down." Possibly in honor of beginning its twentieth year, "Sesame Street" seems to be offering an unusually inviting array of items with its name on them this Christmas. It may be hard for some people to adjust to the news that the Children's Television Workshop, which produces the program, had no trouble locating parents who grew up with it and now watch it with their own children. The carry-around, plastic 1-2-3 Sesame Street Playset includes the famous brownstone, the Fix-It shop, Mr. Hooper's store, and assorted familiar figures, some with their favorite appurtenances, including, of course, Oscar's garbage pail. Everything can be closed up into the case, which has a handle. Kiddie City has this for $24.96. The Sesame Street Poppin' Pals are an array of five well-known residents of the block, each in the form of a small jack-in-the-box. By twisting a knob, pushing a switch, turning a dial, or some such, a child can make each of the five pop up. This is $14.97 at Kiddie City. A twelve-inch very soft plush version of Snuffleupagus is $19.99 at the Toy Park. And at the same place, for $17.99, you'll find the Count, seventeen inches tall, wearing his cape and his monocle, and not cuddly at all, but very good company nonetheless.

It may be that we didn't object to the Dan Quayle jokes ("the Ken doll of the campaign," and so on) as much as we might have, during the Presidential race, since the Senator himself indulged in an unfriendly comment that involved toys. Governor Dukakis, he said in several speeches, had suffered a terrible disaster; he lost his naval adviser—his rubber duckie had drowned in the bathtub. The only Rubber Duckie of our acquaintance is Ernie's, and it says right on the box that he's a waterworthy sort. You can check on this when you buy him at Game Show for $5.98. A Ken doll, dressed in a colorful beach outfit and known as California Ken, is $9.97 at Kiddie City. His good friend Barbie is available all over town at prices ranging from $4 to $25 or so, depending on the store and the outfit she's wearing. Eleven-and-a-half-inch Barbie has been around since 1959 and is currently the second most popular toy on the charts. Like five-and-a-half-inch G.I. Joe, who has been around, off and on, since 1964, she has her own enclave—duchy, you might say—in most toy departments. Quite a few people disapprove of fashion dolls, of which Barbie is one, and many disapprove of war toys, of which G.I. Joe is a prime example, but by now the two long-running entries—who, after all, have outlasted the managements of many of the stores in which they have house room—have become almost categories in themselves: there are blocks, plush toys, trains, Barbie, and G.I. Joe. The pair are routinely referred to as the baby boomers' golden oldies. Hasbro, which makes Joe, is now the largest toy company in the world, and Mattel, which makes Barbie, is the second largest. G.I. Joe, like Barbie, is not a major investment to start with; he's four or five dollars everywhere. As you add Barbie's clothes and companions, such as Ken, and G.I. Joe's fellow-soldiers and military equipment, the cost mounts up. Not much is known about Barbie except that she has expensive tastes and is a girl with no visible means of support. In the case of G.I. Joe, however, Hasbro follows the practice, now popular for little boys' small plastic friends, of supplying a biography. Some of the biographies can be interesting. The one on the back of a Joe called Outback, who is $4.99 at the Toy Park, begins, "He has extensive experience in Central America and may or may not have participated in



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clandestine operations in the Middle East." As far as we know, Outback was not called as a witness in the Iran-Contra hearings.

AND now for the miscellaneous last roundup. "E.T.," as you may have heard, is now available as a videocassette, for $24.95. Sales have amounted to ten million so far—more than for any other cassette in history. When "E.T." came out, six years ago, one review compared it with Rosebud in "Citizen Kane," in its evocation of "the adventure of childhood, the symbol of memory, of home and faith and innocence and living in the moment . . . of being nine years old again." An eleven-inch plush version of E.T., soft pink with bright-blue eyes, is $12.95 at the Hallmark stores. We said there were hardly any robots around anymore, but a videocassette of a game called Robot, based on characters from novels by Isaac Asimov, can be played at four levels of difficulty, so they say, and costs $29.95 at Barnes & Noble. We have located a cheating yo-yo at Alphabet Alley for $10. It's called the Yo-Yo with a Brain and always moves back up the string. A so-called Pocket Trout is actually a flashlight encased in a bright-colored four-inch rubbery plastic fish. Its makers insist, tweaking the Smithsonian, that that institution "places the Pocket Trout's origins in the early Paleozoic period." It's $3.99 at Toys R Us, and it might be just the thing for someone trying to find the last goody for a Christmas stocking.

Now that most children's records come in cassette form, one of them might well be found lurking in a stocking toe. If a storytelling cassette was what you had in mind, this year Caedmon offers Katharine Hepburn reading six fairy tales, including "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "The Emperor's New Clothes." Some may remember her as the lively young actress who helped bring down Cary Grant's huge dinosaur skeleton in "Bringing Up Baby"—at a time when few people, young or old, paid dinosaurs much attention. Now Miss Hepburn sounds like everybody's great-aunt as she reads in her shaky but often fierce voice, pretending to smell the blood of an Englishman, and baying like a dog in the Grimms' "Musicians of Bremen." For dinosaur admirers who are willing to take a lighthearted view of the subject, Christopher Plummer reads Mordecai Richler's "Jacob Two-Two and the Dinosaur" in lively and comic fashion. This is the story of a small green lizard who just kept on growing until he became a diplodocus, which was quite a problem to the family he lived with. And a great cassette for this time of year is a slightly abridged version of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," which, like all these Caedmon cassettes, is $8.98. Sir Ralph Richardson and Paul Scofield do the major honors. Some of the younger members of the family may prefer "Mickey's Christmas Carol," which is $14.95 as a videocassette. Mickey Mouse plays Bob Cratchit, while Donald Duck's uncle is, naturally, the old miser: Isn't his name Scrooge McDuck? In "The Annotated Christmas Carol," edited by Michael Patrick Hearn ($15), one can learn that Dickens' famous paean to the season, when it was published in 1843, almost by itself revived the holiday rituals that had begun to die out two centuries earlier, in the Cromwell years, when a celebration of Christmas was outlawed by Parliament; at the time "The Christmas Carol" was published such celebrations played little part in the lives of ordinary Englishmen. This annotated volume—which points out that Dickens deliberately wrote the book about Scrooge and the Cratchits not only to bring back Christmas but to portray the heedlessness of the rich toward the poor—includes the original book, from "Marley was dead: to begin with" to Tiny Tim's "God Bless Us, Every One!"

All set now? Got your packet of snow at the ready? We couldn't find a Tiny Tim doll, but here are Oliver and the Dodger. Is there room at the table for one small dinosaur? And maybe a cherished alien whom we haven't seen for a while? And could Olive Oyl be let out of the kitchen at least until the plastic dinner is ready? Play well, everybody! Merry Christmas!

●

BEST SELLER: The West German government has paid almost $2 million for the manuscript of *Franz Kafka's The Trial* That sets a record for a modern literary treasure. It was bought Thursday a Sotheby's in London for the Marbach Literary Institute near Stuttgart. Kafka wa the Sidney Sheldon of his day.—*USA Today.*

Of course, that was before the day of the miniseries.

BOOKS

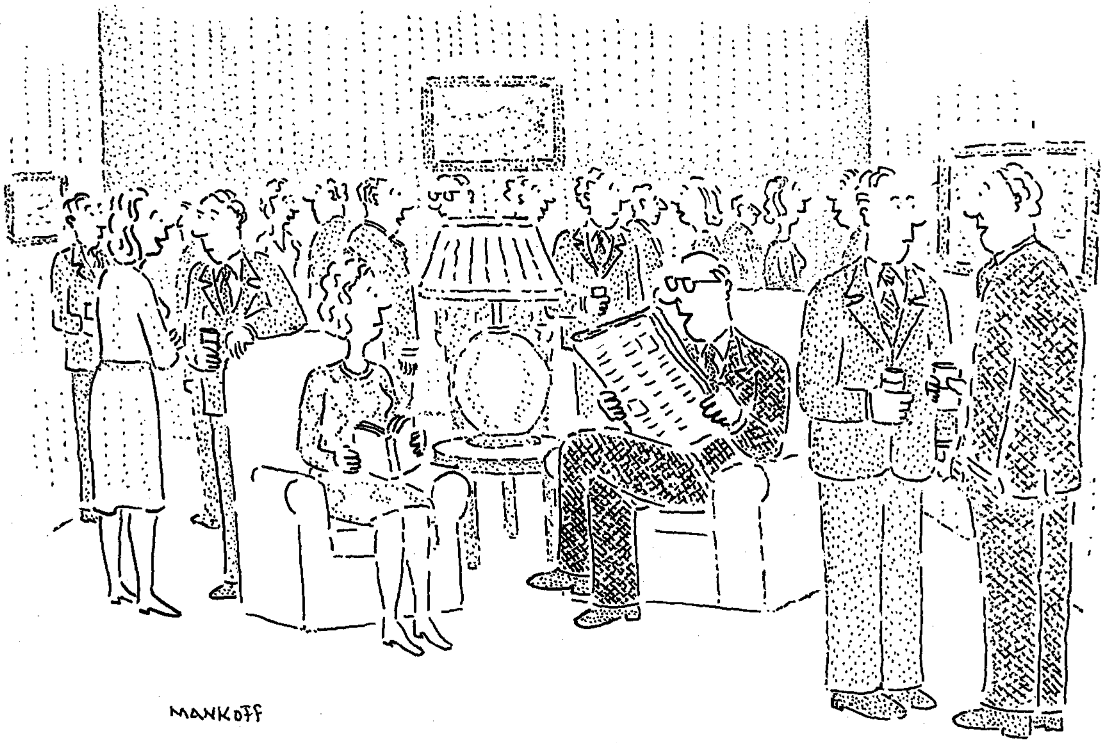
Coming of Age

JONATHAN FRANZEN'S "The Twenty-seventh City" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $19.95) is a first novel that doesn't feel like a first novel. It's certainly not the kind of earnest semi-autobiographical narrative that used to be the standard for literary débuts—the novel about growing up sensitive somewhere in the hard heart of the country, getting laid, learning harsh lessons about the rottenness of the world, having a life-affirming epiphany anyway, and finally deciding (at least implicitly) to become a writer. This twenty-nine-year-old has instead produced a gigantic, complex novel about St. Louis (the twenty-seventh-largest city in the United States, we're told) which is narrated in the third person and, most remarkably, doesn't have a single character who is an obvious surrogate for the author. The main characters are a middle-aged businessman and civic leader named Martin Probst and S. Jammu, a woman from Bombay, who is the city's new chief of police. At first, the novel's scope is impressive, and we're rather grateful for its impersonality: anyone who reads a lot of fiction has read the heartfelt, solipsistic coming-of-age novel so many times that anything betraying even a slightly more detached perspective seems almost revolutionary. But after a while Franzen's scrupulously maintained air of objectivity stops being attractive and begins to eem a little unnatural. When we come to the nd of the book, after ive hundred and seven-een pages of ingenious, ensely plotted fiction, he only thing we know or certain about Jon-than Franzen is that e's an awfully talented uy, and there's some-hing wrong with that. The Twenty-seventh ity" is, after all, about he place where (the flap opy informs us) the uthor grew up. You'd ever suspect it: his descriptions of his home town have no emotional resonance—he writes about it as if he were a city-planning consultant from out of town, on a retainer. It takes hard work to achieve this degree of opacity. The mystery is why any writer—much less a first-time novelist, who is necessarily in the process of defining himself, announcing his identity to the world—would want to.

The book is a weird hybrid of realism and fantasy: municipal science fiction. Everything proceeds from a daring, outrageously unlikely premise—that this conservative Midwestern city would turn its police force over to an Indian (she has dual citizenship, because her father was an American), and that this woman would then use her position to subvert the social structure of the community. Wisely, Franzen doesn't wear himself out trying to make this seem plausible. Like a science-fiction writer, he just lays out the narrative's coördinates for us at the start—tells us what we're going to have to accept if we want to enter this world—and barrels ahead, trusting that the rigorous working out of the premise's implications will at some point begin to override our skepticism. He presents Jammu as a kind of mad social scientist performing unethical experiments on the middle-class citizens of St. Louis:

> Jammu had developed the idea of a [psychological] "State" in which a subject's everyday consciousness became severely limited. The mildest version of the State, the one most readily managed in Bombay, exploited income-tax anxiety. To the lives of dozens of citizens whose thinking she wished to alter, Jammu had had the Bureau of Revenue bring horribly protracted tax audits. And when the subject had reached a state in which he lived and breathed and dreamed only taxes, she'd move in for the kill. She'd ask a favor the subject would ordinarily never dream of granting, force a blunder the subject six months earlier would not have committed, elicit an investment the subject should have had a hundred reasons not to make.... Any situation could be developed, any weakness on the subject's part.

Jammu is a master manipulator. She uses the media expertly, identifies and then exploits the weaknesses of the city's leaders, consolidates the power of her department by staging terrorist attacks that are attributed to a mysterious group known as the Osage Warriors—American Indian guerrillas who exist only in Jammu's devious imagination



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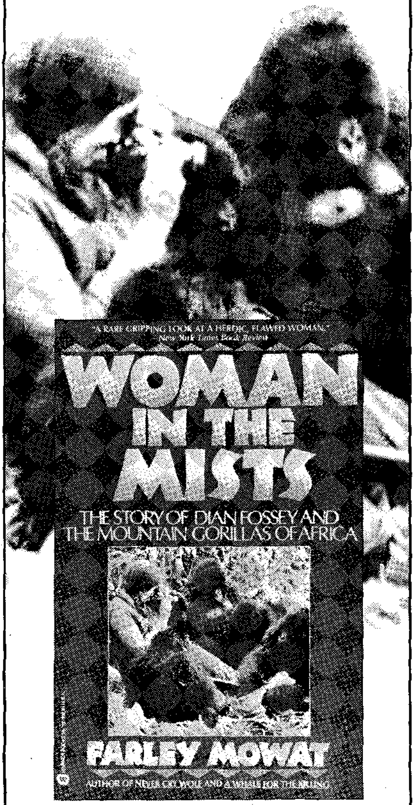
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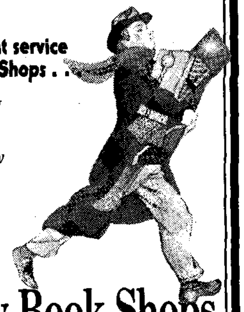

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—and before long most of St. Louis is in the State. The battle between this quietly overpowering woman and a rather depressed, aimless city seems an unequal one; so, for the sake of drama, Franzen provides Jammu with one particularly difficult subject. This is Martin Probst, a decent family man, a paragon of civic virtue, the builder of St. Louis's arch, the most respected businessman in the city. He's the key to the success of Jammu's plan, but he's a man who seems to have "no weaknesses." (Jammu's only outright foe, a right-wing paranoiac named General Norris, is, compared to Probst, a minor player in the business community; his head's too hard to be penetrated by the doubts and fears that the police chief specializes in, so she doesn't even try.)

As we might have guessed, Probst turns out to be not nearly as invulnerable as he appears. In the absence of vices, his virtues are used against him. He has all the heartland values—straightforwardness, industry, fairness, love of family—so Jammu contrives to strip him of the material and emotional comforts his American goodness has won him. The dog is run over by a car; the teen-age daughter leaves home to live with a suspect boyfriend; the family gardener is revealed to be a pervert; the wife seems to have run off with another man (actually she has been kidnapped by one of Jammu's confederates); the house burns down. Plotting the campaign against Probst, Jammu's chief conspirator concludes, "As a citizen of the West, Probst was *a priori* sentimental. In order to induce the State in him, it might be necessary only to accelerate the process of bereavement, to compress into three or four months the losses of twenty years." There are terrific possibilities for dark social comedy in this situation. In Jammu's psychological assault on the city, Franzen has created for himself an opportunity to invent some wonderful, malicious havoc for his home town. But he backs off. The behavior of Probst and his fellow St. Louisans in the State isn't nearly as revealing or as funny as it should be: some of Jammu's victims are greedy, many are wimpy, a few drift into uncharacteristic adulteries. It's mild, unsurprising stuff, for the most part. The book is always fairly absorbing, in a miniseries sort of way, but it's puzzlingly even-tempered. Franzen may have intended "The

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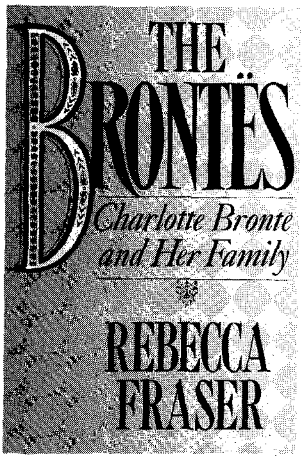

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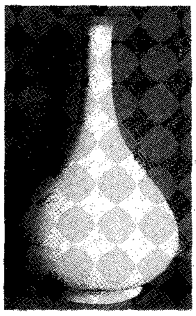

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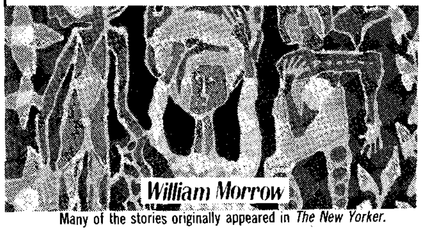

Many of the stories originally appeared in *The New Yorker.*

Twenty-seventh City” as an act of imaginative revenge on St. Louis; by the end of the book, though, we have no idea what he’s up to. He’s as cool and inscrutable as Jammu—we’re never quite sure what drives her, either—and finally we suspect that he’s just blowing smoke. It’s as if he wanted to put his readers in the State.

Ultimately, Franzen’s novel, like Jammu’s plan, is about nothing but its own ingenuity: its power to fog the minds of unsuspecting subjects. Everything, including the author’s emotional connection to the material, seems to have been sacrificed in favor of readability—the kind of don’t-look-back narrative drive that keeps readers breathless and docile. He’s an exceptionally skillful storyteller, but after a while even his gifts begin to look like tactics for evasion. What does it *mean* that St. Louis is under siege by this Indian woman? Surely he isn’t trying to tell us that the solid civic and family values of the Midwest are being threatened by the Third World. Or by scheming women. Is he? Or is he simply using Jammu as a device to show how “soft” good Americans have ecome, how susceptible to manipula-ion by harder-hearted, more decisive orces? (And is this why the only St. Louisan who isn’t taken in by Jammu s stubborn old General Norris?) It’s mpossible to judge Franzen’s attitudes, nd impossible to imagine why he has et up his explosive metaphorical onfrontation between a stereotypical Vest and a purely notional East, if not o make some kind of political state-ent. The most disheartening thing bout “The Twenty-seventh City” is hat this young novelist seems not to ealize that plotting is more than tech-ique—that it’s also a vehicle of mean-g. For him to present the duel be-ween Jammu and Probst as a contest f two empty, neutral systems of values not enough. The situation is too ighly charged for him to pretend that doesn’t matter which side wins. By fecting not to care, Franzen creates a ge void in the center of his novel. He lds our interest—yet we wonder w, in the long, arduous course of riting this novel, he managed to hold s own.

N a way, “The Twenty-seventh City” is less like a first novel than e a first film—a Hollywood film, at is. It’s essentially a performance, a

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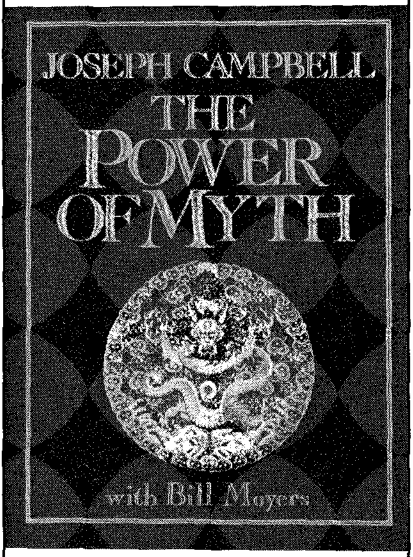

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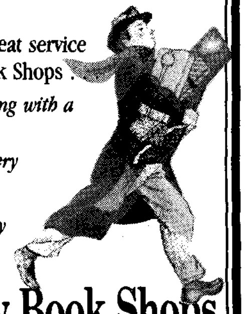

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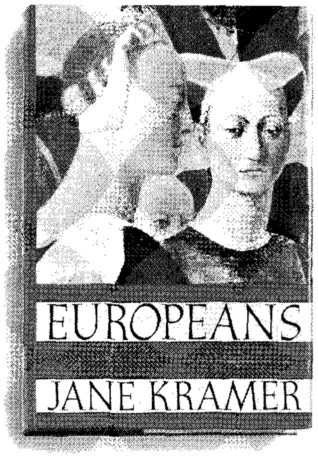
demonstration of skills. (Mainstream American filmmakers know that they're not likely to be allowed to do anything "personal" or "meaningful" the first time out.) The point is to give the impression that you're a seasoned pro, not a self-indulgent kid—that you don't care about anything but getting the job done. There's a lot to be said for discipline and craft, especially from the point of view of the audience—who can't be expected to share an artist's passionate interest in the details of his personal history or the nuances of his emotional responses. The risk for a writer in taking this approach is that he will miss the opportunity to define himself, to discover what's unique about where he stands in relation to the world. The traditional coming-of-age-type first novel may be a drag for the reader, but it's important to the writer: it's his life, his exploration of experience, his (often depressing) attempt to find out whether he's really as different as he thinks he is. Such novels have at least a sense of urgency: we don't have to ask *why* they were written.

The problem is that these self-explorations tend to have a certain sameness: what feels terribly intimate and specific to the writer may feel generic to us. Franzen's technocratic manner is one response: he represses himself completely, and concentrates on wowing the reader with narrative architecture. Other young writers have managed to work out ways to achieve some reader-friendly formal detachment without wholly renouncing the messier business of thinking about their lives. Earlier this year, Michael Chabon's "The Mysteries of Pittsburgh" (reviewed in our issue of July 4th; Morrow, $16.95) attracted a lot of attention despite being an *extremely* traditional first novel. What makes the book interesting is that the author seems fully aware of its essential familiarity. Chabon's style is chiselled and elegant, and he treats the sentimental-education story as a classic form, deserving of respect: his passion is evident in the scrupulous care of his sentences and in the doggedness of his attempt to give the present-day lives of young Americans the dignity and weight of stories from a classic bildungsroman. The novel isn't quite convincing—this probably isn't the best way to render contemporary experience—but it's a brave and intelligent try. And we can feel in the writing a



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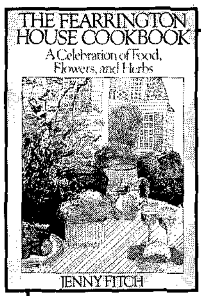
FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX

All of the contents of this book originally appeared in *The New Yorke*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slight heaviness that's like the latecomer's sadness, the artist's awareness that it has all been done before: we sense, somehow, that Chabon knows he is failing but is going on anyway. We can hear the process of the writer's true education in the rueful, dragged-down rhythms of his prose.

Michael Tolkin's "The Player" (Atlantic Monthly; $17.95) attacks the first-novel problem in another, more oblique manner. Tolkin, a Los Angeles screenwriter, writes about his way of life by imagining someone else's. His main character is a young Hollywood studio executive named Griffin Mill, who is, literally, a killer. A weaselly vice-president of produc- ion, Mill casually destroys struggling screenwriters by promising to "get back to" them and then ignoring them completely. When he starts receiving anonymous threatening letters from one of the disappointed writers ("In he name of all the writers in Hollywood who get pushed around by execu- ives who know nothing more about movies than what did well last week nd have no passion for film, I'm going o kill you"), Mill decides to see for imself how these strange creatures ve, and chooses, at random, a man amed David Kahane; then, when they eet, the screenwriter's contempt for he executive is so obvious that Mill rangles Kahane with his bare hands. e continues to be hounded by the tters, sweats over his position at the udio, courts Kahane's girlfriend, and ies to avoid being arrested for mur- r; he is, of course, a world-class liar. undamentally, "The Player" is a nre novel—a psychological thriller the Highsmith-Rendell mode. But cept for its trim, controlled form ere's nothing detached about it. The ok's distinction is that there's real, rning malice in every word. Instead a portrait of the artist as a young an, Tolkin has written a portrait of e executive as a young psycho, and erything we need to know about the hor is in it. The novel is no great hievement, but it's more than a pro's formance. Tolkin's hatred is gleeful d strong, and we certainly don't have wonder why he felt compelled to ome a novelist: clearly, it beats writ- screenplays for cold-blooded creeps e Griffin Mill.

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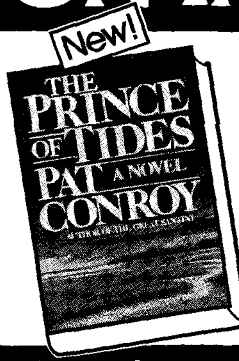

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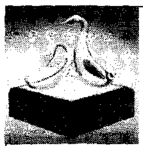

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mon & Schuster; $17.95), which takes the worn, debased material of the coming-of-age novel and makes it seem new and strange again. The novel is, in a sense, about the process of developing the kind of consciousness necessary for writing novels. It's all wary, minutely detailed encounters between strangers, a series of explorations of the progress of intimacy—a romance of cognition. The heroine, Joey Taylor, is a smart teen-age girl who becomes fascinated by a middle-aged recluse named David Giffard. Giffard lives in a house in the woods and spends his days playing the piano and watching movies on the wall—the same ones over and over, fragmented, soundless, and all featuring a young unknown actor. Joey first spies on Giffard—watching him as he watches his movies—and then begins to take piano lessons from him. These are two exceptionally private, guarded people, and the way they get to know each other isn't simple: their relationship proceeds by means of complex patterns of concealment and revelation, often mediated by the music and Giffard's movies. The relationship isn't sexual—it's more father-daughter or teacher-student—but their scrutiny of each other is peculiarly erotic: they are trying to see themselves through each other's eyes, and the tiniest shadings of appearance become terribly important, occasions of self-doubt and introspection. At one point, Giffard spells out the novel's theme. "Each person, don't you think, possesses the world in his own way?" he says to Joey. "He sees it from a space that no one else can occupy, then makes sense of what he sees according to unique circumstances—a unique combination of inclination and position. . . . By looking at a person, by placing yourself in his path, you become part of his world. You alter his circumstances. Your scrutiny alters its object, and vice versa, and it can go on like that between two people forever without exhausting every possibility." Stated baldly, this idea isn't particularly startling; it even has the slightly embarrassing quality of adolescent deep thoughts. But Akins' bluntness is winning, and what she's saying goes straight to the heart of things. Giffard's ideas help explain why "Home Movie" has such conviction: Akins seems to be discovering as she writes her novel that the possibilities in even the most familiar things, the most basic relationships, the oldest stories, haven't yet been exhausted.

Akins is helplessly unique. She writes as if a novel were simply a way of thinking about the world—as it is—and she's willing to let her thoughts develop freely, unencumbered by any notion of proper form. This book isn't constructed like other novels. After a hundred pages devoted to Joey and Giffard's odd duet of self-exploration, Akins takes Joey off to Los Angeles (in search of the young actor from Giffard's movies) and introduces a new set of characters, whose stories are entirely unconnected with hers at first, and ultimately affect her in only the most oblique and intuitive ways. The book ends on an extended tangent. The heroine doesn't appear in the last sixty pages; we know she's on the road, heading home from California, but we have to imagine, through the other characters, what she'll be like when she gets back. The novel keeps veering, returning to the course, then repeating itself; it promises and then refuses t define itself, and the effect is mysteriou and exciting. One of the main charac- ters in the California section is a mal stripper calling himself Bobby Rose whose stage act is an elaborate mean of attracting the audience's attentio while denying the possibility of inti macy. Akins' novel is a kind of ex tended meditation on the dialectic o stripping and covering up. Despite th nakedness of the emotions, Akin writing is often so dense that we strug gle to figure out what's happening an why. It's as if she were reluctant to b entirely clear, to allow us to know h too easily. The book is tough to read– frustrating and absorbing, the way person is. All of this writer's conf sions—her contradictory impulses reticence and self-assertion, the co flicting claims of self-protection a openness to others—are right on t surface, defiantly displayed. "Ho Movie" has the richness and tortur complexity of the youthful sensibility its best. That is to say, it's a real fi novel, exhilaratingly unprofessional.

—TERRENCE RAFFER

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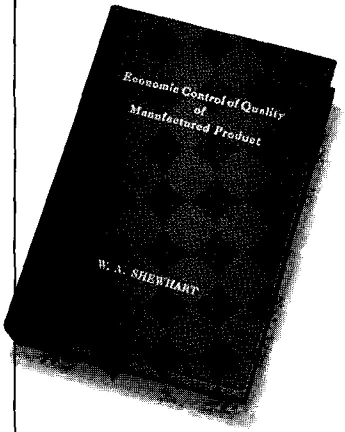

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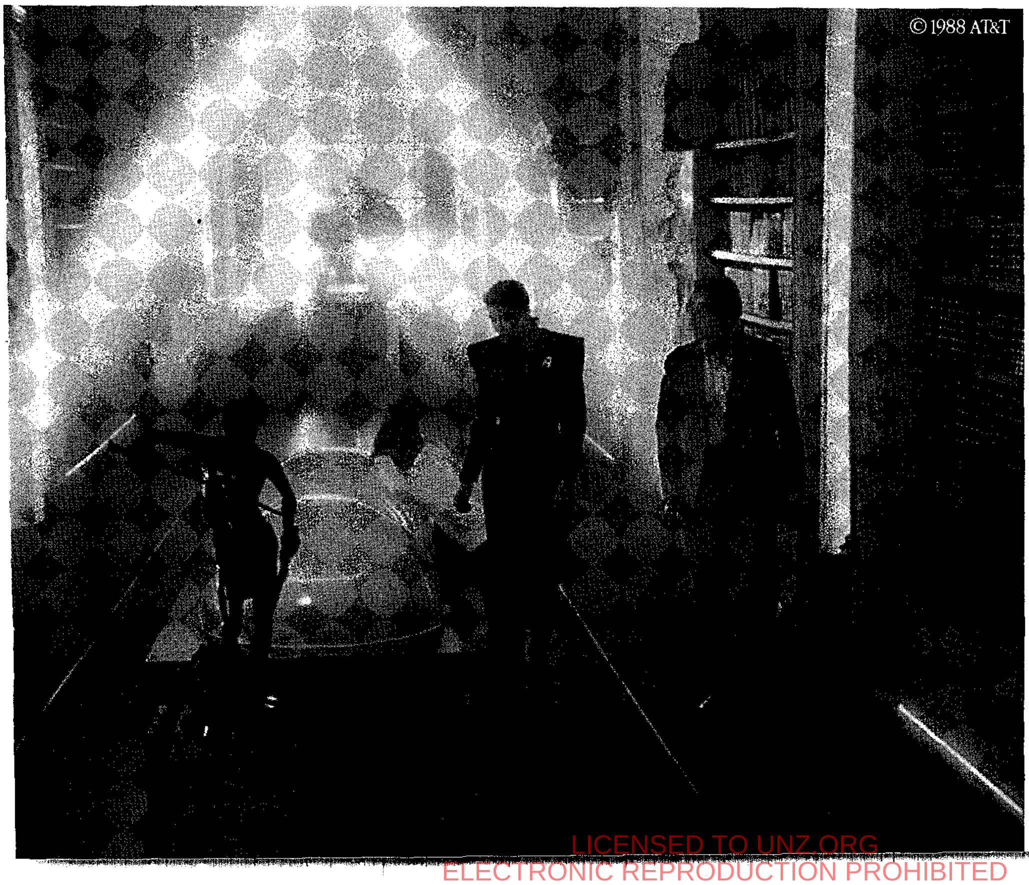

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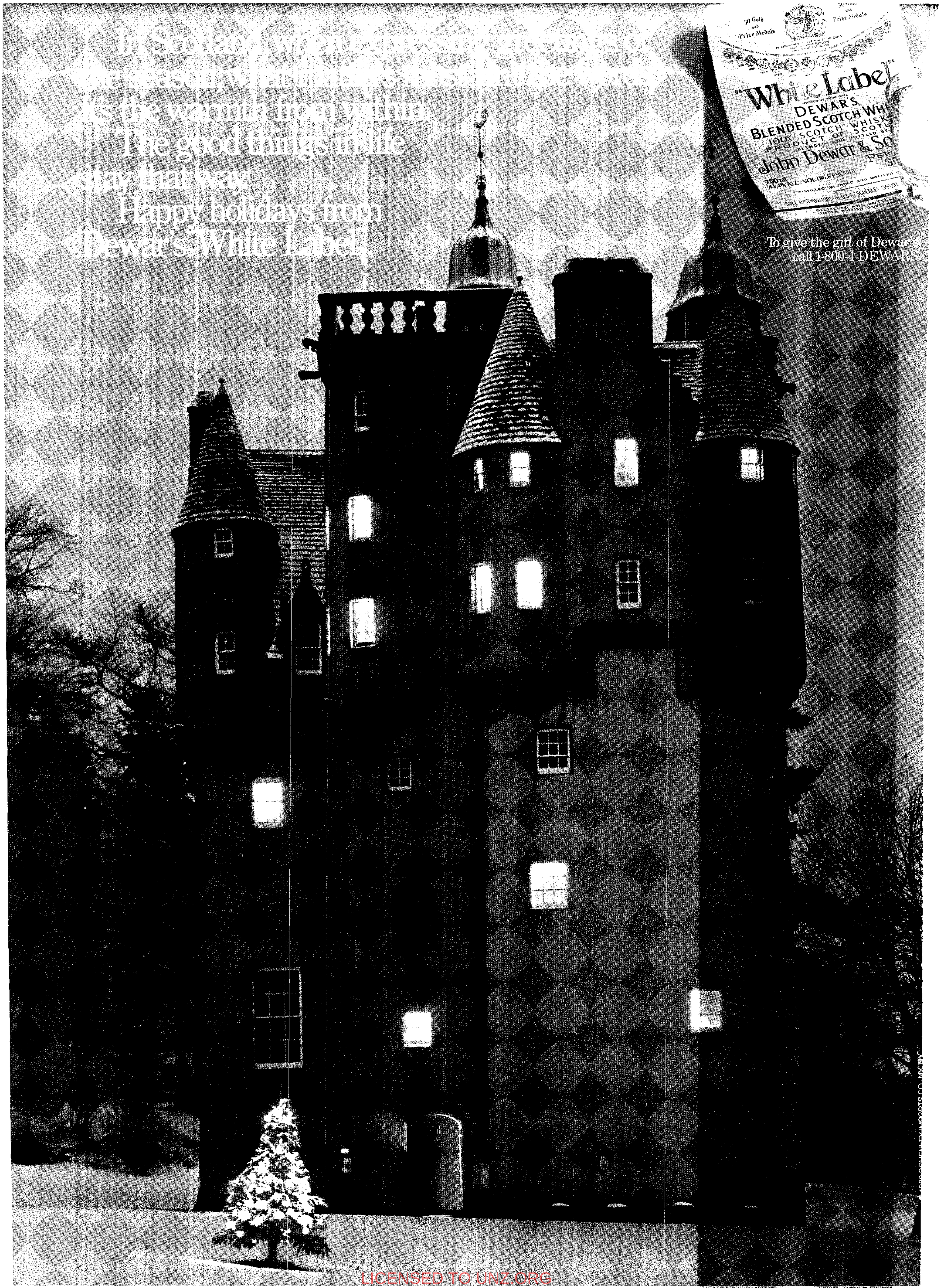

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